Week ending April 13 1957 *Every Wednesday Fourpence*

JOHN BULL

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I see the witchdoctor's crocodile dance

Complete stories by BARRY PEROWNE, N. J. CRISP and ROBERT HOLMES

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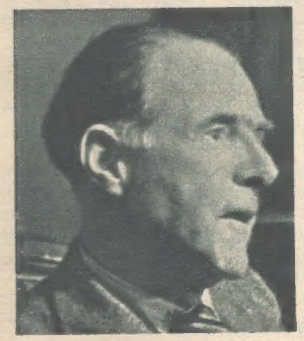

L. A. G. Strong—his first poem was about an aged sow

WHEN he was a boy, L. A. G. Strong often visited the church in the tiny Devon village of Sheepstor, not far from his home on the slopes of Dartmoor. He has been back several times since, and last year he went there again—in his imagination. The result is his poem, *The Return*, which appears on page 34.

Strong's poetic talent showed itself when he was thirteen years old—he is now a young-looking sixty-one. His first attempt was a mock ballad in old English, the last line of each stanza being "Amelia, ye aged sowe." It earned him nothing but a scolding from his mother, who pointed out that Amelia was the name of his grandmother. Strong was unrepentant. "I protested that while I dearly loved my grandmother, I still thought Amelia was a good name for a sow."

For twelve years he was an assistant master at a preparatory school at Oxford, and then, in 1930, he became a full-time freelance writer.

Leonard Alfred George Strong and his wife live in the country, between Farnham and Frensham in Surrey; their only son is at Guy's Hospital, London, studying to be a doctor.

Like many writers, Strong had a struggle to be heard in the early stages. "Fortunately, I was extremely stubborn and didn't give up."

Now he has written more short stories than he can remember, and nearly a score of novels. His next story to be broadcast will be his 150th to be heard on the air.

IT was in Africa that John Crompton first took an interest in insects. "Out there," he says, "they rather thrust themselves upon you. You get to wonder what all the different sorts are, and what on earth they are all doing." Forty years later, Crompton is still fascinated—though he's now an expert on the subject. In JOHN BULL this week he writes about wasps (page 17).

Crompton, who is in his sixties, spent several years in Africa—as a member of the British South Africa Police. Then, in 1919, he moved on to China. "My job was insurance and shipping, but on trips inland I found fascinating animals and wild life." Nature has fascinated him since he was a boy. When his friends were playing football, John Crompton would be out looking for spiders, butterflies and bird's nests.

In Africa he learned to love the remote places. "But I soon got to dislike game hunting. I found that a camera and patience gave much more fun than a gun." After being invalided home in 1932, Crompton took to bee-keeping.

Now he studies wild life and writes about it. His wife and thirteen-year-old daughter, Sarah, also take an interest in nature and Sarah often brings home spiders. "Ah, spiders," says Crompton. "Now, they're favourites of mine. . . ." He is planning an article about them, which we will publish later in the year.

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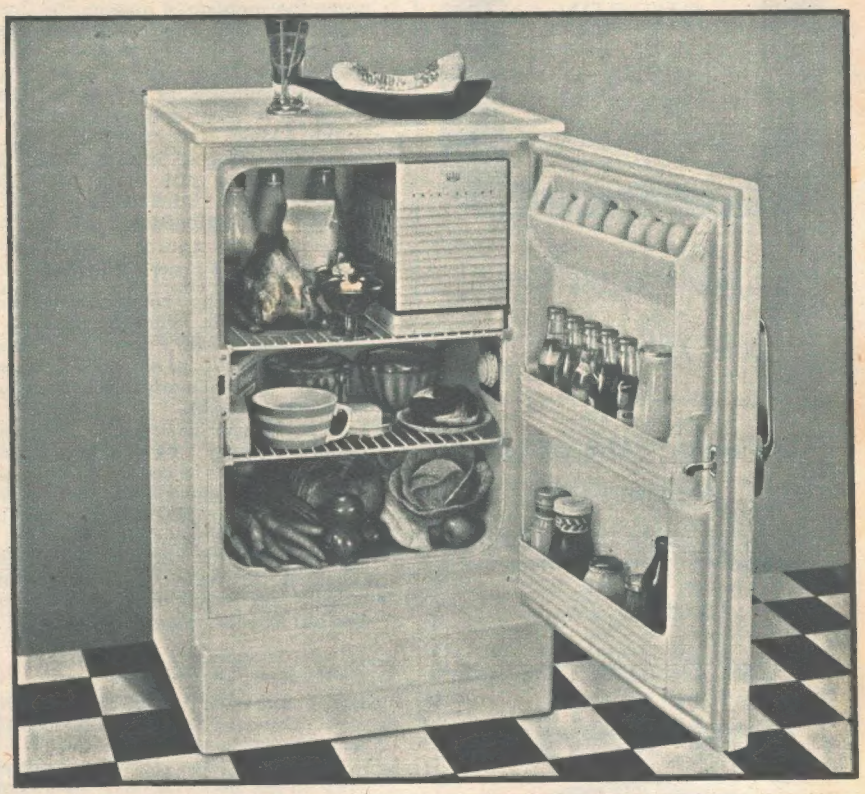

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Free Speech

- **Why toy ducks fascinate men**
- **Silencing chatterboxes**
- **Getting odd angles on chimneys**

I AM tired of those amused, superior little comments women are constantly making about the supposed foibles of men.

"Leave him to empty the bath when it is full of children's toys and he is happy for an hour," they giggle over the tea cups.

The point is, of course, that women, with their usual lack of perception, see a plastic duck where men see a fascinating object lesson in the science of water displacement. Men want to know *how* its designer overcame the problem of making the duck right itself when it is floated on its side.

And it is this very desire to delve deeper into the natural laws lying behind commonplace objects that has given men their natural superiority.

But I know from experience that it is useless trying to explain all this to women. They just don't have the same kind of intelligence.—P. M., Stevenage, Hertfordshire.

Character From Cricket

The reader who complained about time lost in his office because of a "bat and ball game" ("Free Speech," March 23) should be pleased that he has so many cricket enthusiasts on his staff.

In my long experience of office and factory workers I have always found those interested in cricket to be more reliable and accurate in their work than those who followed other games.

Cricket develops character, and I am sure that its followers are always prepared to make good any time wasted discussing it.—IVOR WHITE, Crofton Road, Orpington, Kent.

Patients Exhausted

There must be some reason why women are more finnicky in hospital than the men patients.

When we have to wake women early to get the beds made they complain, and they are always the first to moan about the food.

I worked in a men's ward for two years. Most of them seemed to realize

how hard nurses have to work and were co-operative and tolerant.

They did not look upon us as hired helps as some women seem inclined to do.—MISS G. A., Lancashire.

"I suspect that the simplest answer to this problem would be to provide women patients with male nurses," says a hospital official.

Close-knit Jumpers

Derrick Harrison's account of parachute training ("These Men Are Dangerous," JOHN BULL, March 9) reminds me of an incident at Ringway Airfield, near Manchester, where I was a trainee paratrooper.

Ten daredevil Special Air Service men on a refresher course, all wearing full kit, squeezed themselves between the open door of a Dakota aircraft and the opposite wall of the fuselage. When the jump light showed, the man at the rear gave a heave and rushed out after the rest.

The result, recorded by the aircraft's ciné camera, was eight unopened parachutes at the same time—and a parachute takes less than two seconds to open. But shortly afterwards the ten S.A.S. men were publicly reprimanded in front of all us green-horns.—J. G. LAUDER, East Lothian.

Liberal Assistants

Mrs. J. C., of Wiltshire, obviously doesn't encourage her husband to share the normal weekend shopping

("Free Speech," March 16), otherwise he would not be such a failure in an emergency.

My husband and I always enjoy shopping together, but if I am unable to go he invariably returns with more bargains and free samples and better quality goods than I would have done.

The shop assistants, especially the girls, are so sympathetic towards him.—MRS. M. MASSEY, Holsworthy, Devonshire.

Cure For Gossips

I know a cure for the bus chatterboxes mentioned by Helen MacGregor ("Free Speech," March 23).

My husband and a friend sat quietly while two women behind them talked terrible scandal about another woman. Eventually my husband's friend turned to him and said in a loud stage whisper: "I never knew Mrs. C—— was a woman like that."

There was an immediate silence and the two gossipers hurriedly left the bus at the next stop. My husband and his friend had a good laugh. Neither of them had ever heard of Mrs. C—— before.—MRS. M. V., Edinburgh.

Willingly To School

I read with amazement the letter by B. L., of Hampshire, deploring boarding schools ("Free Speech," March 16).

My experience is that the only mothers who cry when waving their sons and daughters off to school are those who would have pampered and petted the little darlings until they had no characters of their own.

Boys at my own school say that their parents realize the advantages of expert teaching and are glad for their sons' sakes when he goes away.

They know that he will enjoy himself and they don't miss him after a time. Indeed, they have eight months' comparative quiet each year—and perhaps, in this age of coronary thrombosis, this is a good thing.—M. F. T., Bath.

Getting It Straight

One often sees chimney flues built at odd angles on older houses. Sometimes they lean sharply outward and then slope back so that the chimney-pots are directly above the fireplaces.

Having seen new houses with this type of flue I wonder if there is any advantage in this seemingly crazy construction. Such chimneys must be very difficult to sweep.—K. C. L., Wickford, Essex.

"Many builders have pet theories about chimney construction," says the Building Research Station. "We recommend straight flues with caps at the top to keep the rain out."

Personal Probing

When registering as a hospital out-patient recently I gave my name as Mrs. M——. The clerk noted this, and then casually asked: "Married, widowed or separated?"

Is this a sign of the times? I can't imagine this question being asked thirty years ago.—MRS. K. M. M., Bristol.

"Hospitals use their discretion about the amount of information required from out-patients," says the Ministry of Health. "But a patient could refuse to answer a question of this kind."

Off The Record

Sir Basil Henriques says that the need to revise the law which allows offences by juveniles to remain on their records during adult life has now been recognized ("Children In Trouble," JOHN BULL, March 16).

Surely the law should be suspended until the committee of inquiry has found a solution.—MISS G. B., Glasgow.

John Bull pays one guinea for each letter published in "Free Speech," and at the usual rates for photographs. Readers with problems (other than medical) should write to the John Bull Free Advice Service, whose experts answer questions by post

THE COVER

No, this is not quite the method recommended by the experts. But at least the paper is airborne and not—so far—sticking to the back of his neck. One supreme effort and virtue will be rewarded. Mother can then relax from her Statue of Liberty pose and Father can mop his brow with self-satisfaction. The young spectators in Coleman's cover will remain the only critics. As lifelong artists in paper and paste, they know that they would have done the job in half the time, and enjoyed it twice as much. And made just as much mess.

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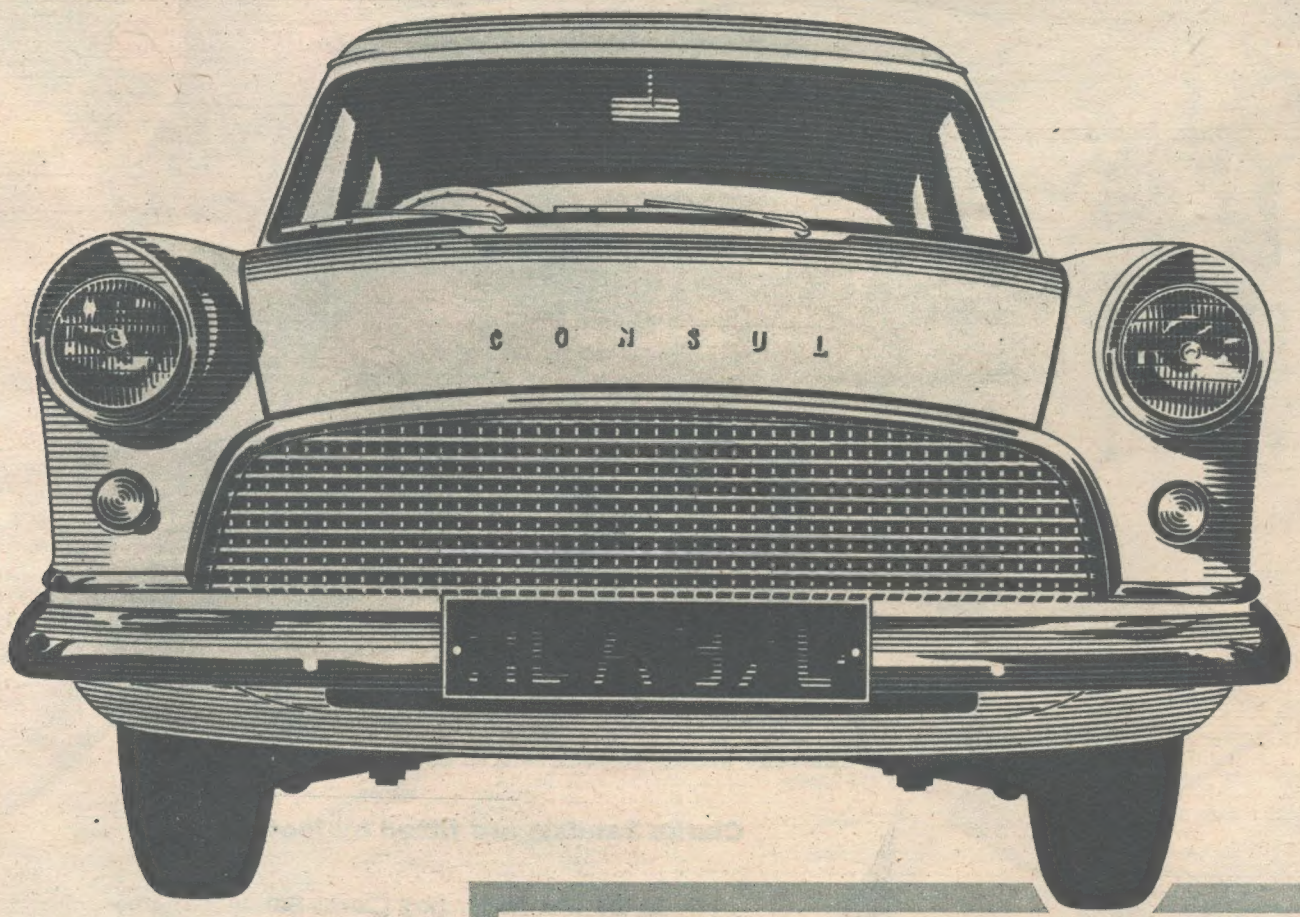

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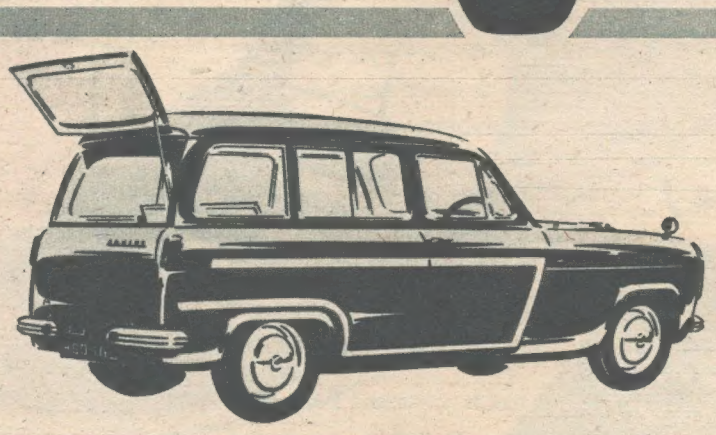

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The schoolmaster could handle truants. But this one had run away with a killer

Outlaw Boy

by BARRY PEROWNE

IT was the hour of siesta. In the main square of the small Mexican town, the bus lumbered to a standstill. Flatly torpid, the town ignored it. The shutters of the squat, flat-roofed houses remained closed. The bead curtains in the doorways hung motionless. The whitewashed church lifted its open belfry in silhouette against steep, mesquite-dotted hillsides.

The bus was white with alkali dust from its journey across the desert. The few passengers melted away into the scant shade of alleys opening off the square. Henry Bow, the last to alight, was left alone. He set down his suitcase and rolled a cigarette.

He was in the middle thirties, a wiry, tall man with a slight, scholarly stoop. The eyes behind his sun-glasses were grey. His face was thin, tanned and meditative. His cap, his colourful but well-worn clothes and the fact that he spoke Spanish with an accent neither *mejicano* nor *yanqui*, had made him a bit of a puzzle to his fellow passengers. Few Englishmen of any kind, let alone schoolmasters, found their way to this corner of Mexico.

Henry Bow was surprised to find himself here. He had just completed a six-month teaching stint in Colorado, under an exchange scheme, when he had received from the headmaster of the school at which he taught in England a letter instructing him to come to this Mexican town and collect, and bring back with him, a new boy.

Henry looked at the town thoughtfully as he ran the gummed edge of his cigarette paper along his tongue tip. Behind him, the radiator of the bus emitted expiring gurgles. Before him, the dusty square stretched treeless and vacant. The only signs of life were two mules and a donkey brooding morosely into nosebags at the hitching-rail before

She took the headmaster's letter. "I—I had forgotten this," she said. "Please come in"

ILLUSTRATED BY LAURENT

Robledo put out a hand, and from the boy's limp fingers unwound the thongs of a sling

a *pulqueria*, a wine shop, and an old man snoozing on a chair in the porch shade at the head of the church steps.

Henry thought of far-off green playing fields dotted with cricket pitches under a mellower sun, or with rugby posts under no sun whatever, but always piping with boys' voices, and he wondered how a boy from this town in Mexico was going to fit in there. He had his doubts, especially as the headmaster had said that he feared the boy had been allowed to run a bit wild.

Still, that was the headmaster's business; the boy was his nephew. To Henry he was just a new boy who had to be collected.

He lighted his cigarette, took up his suitcase and walked across the sun-dazzle of the square. As he mounted the church steps, the old man in the porch woke with a snort.

"Doña Sofia Casal?" he said, in reply to Henry's question. He scratched his stubbled jaw, looking Henry over curiously. "Up the street to the right there—the big house with blue shutters."

The street to the right, little more than a channel of burning sand between one-storey shanties, terminated in high iron railings enclosing a courtyard canopied over with grapevines. Under a wrought-iron arch the gates stood open, and a brass plate on the left-hand gatepost announced: *F. Arrigo Casal, Medico.*

Henry paused for a moment. He took off his sun-glasses and tucked them into a pocket. Schoolmasters arriving to fetch a boy to school were seldom, he knew, the most welcome of visitors.

In this case too, though everything had been arranged, the school was thousands of miles away. A mother who, in temporary annoyance at a boy's wildness, might have decided impulsively to pack him off, might just as impulsively —confronted with the event—take a different view. From what Henry had seen of Mexicans, they seemed an emotional people.

He cleared his throat, threw away his cigarette, and, a schoolmaster none too sure of his reception, walked up a tessellated path in the speckled shade of the grapevines.

THE door of the house stood open to a cool, shadowy *entrada* with potted plants and tall-backed, rush-seated chairs set round against its white walls. It was very quiet. Henry was looking for a bell to ring when he heard the tap of heels on the tiled floor within. A woman appeared, carrying a watering can. She saw Henry's long figure standing in the doorway. She checked.

Henry took off his cap. His dark, wiry hair was deeply receded from the temples. "Señora Casal?" he said.

"*Si, señor.*" She was perhaps thirty, slender and graceful, wearing a well-cut black frock. There was a white flower in her smooth, dark hair. Her face was ivory pale, fine-drawn. Her dark eyes regarded Henry questioningly.

He smiled. "My name is Bow," he said. "You'll have been informed, I think, that I should be coming—to fetch the boy."

He was startled by the change in her expression. Her eyes widened.

"The boy?" she said.

"Your son," Henry said. "Sebastian. I've brought a letter of introduction."

She took the letter from him. "I—I had forgotten this," she said. "Please come in. I . . . excuse me, please."

She set down the watering-can and opened the headmaster's letter. Watching her, Henry had the feeling that she wasn't really reading it, only gazing at it, as though to collect her thoughts, to gain time. He wondered what was wrong. Some change of heart, as he had thought might be possible? He had a feeling that there was more to it than that.

Looking at her, he found it easy to understand why Steve Marlyn, the headmaster's young brother, had fallen in love with this girl. The pity was that they had married, for Steve—according to his elder brother—had been born footloose and irresponsible, a rolling stone and an adventurer, incapable of settling down with any woman.

After a year or so of married life, here in Mexico, he had been off on his travels again. Not even the birth of a son had been able to hold him. He had made no real home for them, for years had paid them only flying visits, and finally, and none too creditably, had got himself killed, down in South America.

His elder brother, the reverse of Steve in character, had got in touch at once with Sofia, asking what he could do for her. There had been nothing, but he had kept in touch, writing at intervals, even after she had married again. The truth was, he was worried about his nephew, Steve's son—now twelve years old—and would have liked to have him at the school, under his own eye. His letter to Henry, instructing him to fetch the boy, had shown clearly how delighted he was that Sofia had agreed to this at last.

But had there been a change of heart? Henry watched the boy's mother uneasily as she slowly folded the letter introducing him. She returned it to its envelope, and said in a low voice: "Señor Bow, we are in great trouble. It had put the fact that you would be coming here quite out of my mind. I'm afraid I have bad news for you."

"Of the boy?" Henry said.

"Yes—of Sebastian," she said. "You had better know at once. He's not here. For some weeks we've known only that he's out there somewhere—in the hills there—with his *héroe*."

Her slim hand crunched the letter she held. He saw the ivory shine of her knuckles. He heard the bitterness in her tone. He stared.

"His hero?" he said.

"A man called Robledo," she said. "Oh, a very gallant blade to turn a boy's head. *Muy hombre!*" She looked at Henry Bow and her dark eyes burned. "Robledo is a fugitive," she said, "wanted for murder. He's at large up there in the hills somewhere, and he has Sebastian with him." She drew in her breath. "Come, Señor Bow," she said. "I will take you to my husband. . . ."

Dr. Arrigo Casal was a stocky, vigorous man of about forty. His hair was shot with grey. He had a dark, strong face. In a cool, white-washed room which looked out over tended and watered gardens, at the rear of the house, to the parched hills baking in the sun, he poured wine for Henry.

"My wife and I, Señor Bow," he said, "do not talk much of the past. We have a child of our own now, a little girl. I didn't know Stephen Marlyn, but I did my best for his son. You'll bear me witness, Sofia? I tried to be *simpático* to the boy, but as a stepfather. . . ."

He shrugged. "He was set against me from the first. He was already ten when I married his mother, and—he had a hero against whom I didn't count, could never count. That's why we decided, at last, his mother and I, to accept this offer of his uncle in England and let him go right away there, to the school—for a few years, at any rate. You understand?"

Henry nodded. "This man Robledo?" he said.

"A handsome, swaggering, conceited ruffian," Don Arrigo said. "Bone idle. A hero to the young men on the strength of a couple of seasons in the bull-ring, though he never made good. He once wished to marry Doña Sofia here. When

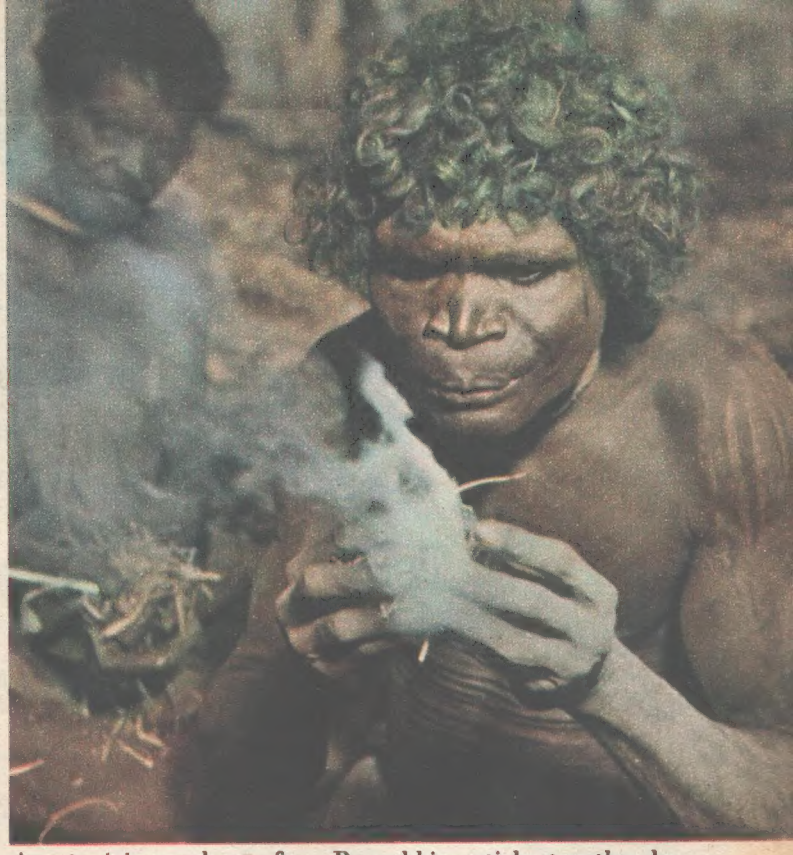
Continued on page 28

LAND OF SINGING DEATH · 2

I see the witchdoctor's fiendish dance

by SYD KYLE-LITTLE

He leaped and whirled in frenzy . . . then walked into the crocodile-filled water



An aborigine makes a fire. By rubbing sticks together he sets dried grass smouldering, and then blows it into flames

On November 27, 1946, I sailed from Darwin aboard the lugger Larrapan, a sturdy veteran of the pearling industry. She had a tiny cabin aft, with two small bunks, a wheelhouse and chart-house. She carried sails as well as a diesel engine.

As a patrol officer of the Native Affairs Branch, I was responsible for the welfare of the aborigines in the great Arnhem Land reserve of Northern Australia. My present job was to track down five Muralidaban tribesmen who had murdered a member of another tribe and attempted to murder his brother. The brother, Jiminmulla, had escaped, and tribal warfare might follow. The task was to take me into a rocky arid region where few white men had ever been and cannibalism was still said to be practised.

We were packed full. In addition to the native crew, under the command of a Chinese-aborigine half-caste named Willie, we had more than a full complement of passengers. They included the Rev. Alf Ellison, a perpetually cheerful South Australian missionary, who had been appointed to Goulburn Island. We also had Mrs. Ellison and her two young children with us.

Mrs. Ellison, an attractive young brunette, was remarkably cheerful about the idea of living at the lonely mission at Goulburn Island. She was of real pioneer stuff, cheerful and courageous, unperturbed and imperturbable.

In addition to my prized medical kit, I had brought with me a variety of stores, including eight army-type water-bottles for the native bearers whom I proposed to recruit, a 50-lb. bag of flour, 20 lb. of sugar, 10 lb. of salt, 10 lb. of stick tobacco, 5 lb. of tea, a folding camera, films in a water-tight, screw-top glass jar, and a flint for lighting fires.

The tobacco and salt I planned to save for trading purposes: my billy-can, from choice, was made out of an old treacle tin.

For my .303 rifle I had two hundred rounds of ammunition. I planned to ration myself to

With a special three-prong spear, a native goes fish hunting. The spear is flung from the woomera, or throwing stick

The lugger Larrapan, in which Kyle-Little travelled from Darwin to Goulburn Island

Kyle-Little and his Number One boy, Oondabund, who appointed himself chief protector of his master. When a native attacked Kyle-Little, Oondabund challenged the man to a spear duel

three food shots a day. I also had a twelve-bore shot gun with sixty rounds of No. 6 shot.

My swag consisted of a length of waterproof canvas, inside which I wrapped two blankets, a mosquito net, a set of spare clothing, soap, a toothbrush and toothpaste, my map, diaries, compass and a bottle of rum—which I proposed to ration out to myself at the rate of a teaspoonful each night.

We reached Goulburn Island in the evening of December 3. I went ashore and interrogated the mission boys. They had checked Jiminmulla's story and found the burned remains of his brother's body near the Liverpool River.

Without delay, I transferred my kit from the Larrapan to the Aeroetta, a ketch which had come in with us from Darwin. I borrowed two dug-out canoes and three boys from the mission and, thus equipped, set sail again.

We reached the mouth of the Liverpool River just before noon on the following day.

The Aeroetta hove to for about twenty minutes while we transhipped my kit and stores to the two dug-out canoes. With mixed feelings, I climbed quickly into one of them. We rigged our sails and, as the Aeroetta sailed east for Milingimbi, we went south for Arnhem Land and the most hazardous assignment of my life.

I HEADED for a native camping place called Juda, where we dragged the canoes up under the big, shady pandanus trees. I rolled out my swag under the largest tree, cleaned and oiled my guns and began to plan my next move. First destination was Muralidaban country.

I hoped to meet some of the local tribesmen fairly soon and I was not disappointed. We had not been ashore for more than an hour when about thirty natives of the Mabanat clan approached. They came as friends, with their dogs and *lubras* (women) and piccaninnies. About half were completely naked, the rest wore brief *nargas* (loin cloths). I felt that their general cheerfulness might well be preserved by an immediate, if small, issue of tobacco.

The Mabanats greeted the tobacco enthusiastically and immediately set to work to collect food. The women searched for oysters among the rocks while the men, with their fish-spears, went out in the clear water and came in with a number of fine barramundi and native salmon.

One young woman, sitting by herself, unfed and unable to eat, was desperately ill. She had been "sung," the natives told me, by a medicine man who lived near the head waters of the Liverpool River.

"His name?"

I shouldn't have asked. I knew already.

It was Mahrdei—the evil man with whom I had already clashed, who hated to see a white man in "black feller country."

I gave one of my precious blankets and a couple of aspirin tablets to the *lubra*. These, I told her family, were super-magic. They would certainly overcome any medicine man's potions.

This created an enormous but short-lived impression. The woman died on the following day, and I lost both my blanket and my reputation as a medicine man.

In the evening, I was writing up my diary entry when an extremely well-built aborigine, young, tall, with cheerful features and tribal markings on his body, approached me.

He stood a yard or two distant, smiling broadly, and said: "I good boy. I no more mission boy."

"What's your name?"

"Oondabund," he said. "I speak Gumauwurrk. I speak Gunaviji. I speak Nagara. I speak Gungorogone. I speak Manyarrabggar. I speak Nalagenu. I speak Rembarrnaja. . . ."

He rolled off the Arnhem Land dialects one after the other, an astonishing claim to knowledge by an obviously superior type of boy.

"I think I work longa you," he said.

"Might be," I replied cautiously. "You want to go longa stone country?" The stone country is a frightening rock desert which the natives call "debil debil" land.

The boy laughed in disbelief and answered me, as he thought, in kind. "Might be. Might be wanta swim longa crocodile."

"Might be," I said.

After that there was very little I could do about it. Oondabund became my Number One boy. With a stick he drew a circle in the dirt around my baggage, informed the others that this was my area, delivered a kick at a dog that failed to comprehend his instructions, and went off.

Half an hour later he returned with his fighting spears, eight of them, and a couple of woomeras. Each spear was about eight to nine feet long, made of mangrove timber and hardened by fire. The shovel-nosed ends of seven of the spears were made of water-pipe, hammered into shape and sharpened on stones. Oondabund's only other equipment consisted of his pandanus fighting-bag, which hung around his neck.

He brought with him his brother, Narlebar, with the obvious intention of making him Number Two boy, and then, with about a dozen other young men, prepared to go on a hunting expedition. Since I was anxious to enlist as much support as possible at this stage, I offered to go along with my rifle.

The unfortunate wallabies had never heard the report of a rifle before, and they sat up asking to be shot. Ammunition was precious, and sportsmanship had no part in my plans, so I bowled them over where they sat and with a dozen shots killed twelve, which the boys carried on their shoulders to the camp.

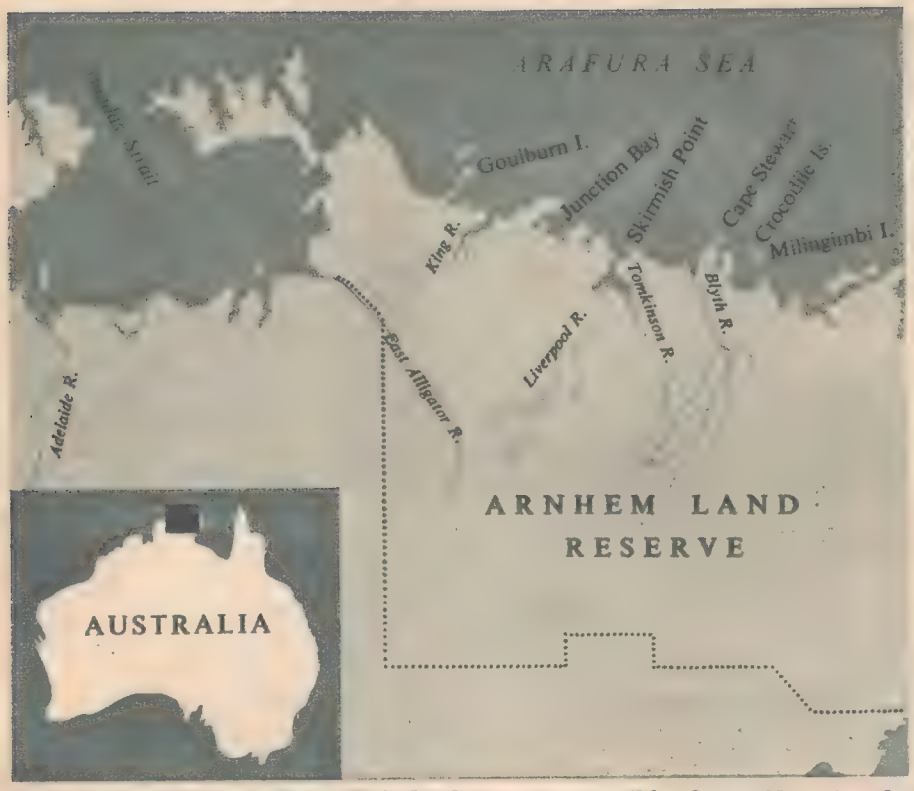
While we were out, the *lubras* had been to the billabong to collect water lily leaves and roots. Others had brought in oysters, turtle eggs and wild fruit, and the older men had replenished the supplies of fish.

Just before dark, divided into family groups, the whole camp began to cook. In a matter of minutes, and without the services of my flint, Oondabund had a brisk fire burning. While the coals were forming I had a couple of dozen fresh oysters and some good, strong tea. Barramundi wrapped in pandanus leaves and baked under the coals, and wallaby leg roasted, with lily stalks and wild fruit, followed.

The night was warm and cloudless and the natives were well fed and happy. Before the moon came up they cleared a big stretch of ground, ripping up tufts of grass, and carting off stones and bits of wood. This accomplished, all the *lubras* and piccaninnies sat down at one end; at the other, the "orchestra" took up its position. This consisted of two boys with didgeridoos (wooden trumpets, hollowed out of the limbs of trees and four to six feet long), and three boys with sticks, which they beat together.

The corroboree began with the orchestra playing and the song-man singing in a voice that was now low and hoarse and then high and shrill. The *lubras* kept time by beating their thighs and clapping their hands.

Behind the line of fires, which the natives kept well supplied with wood as a deterrent to the numerous mosquitoes and sandflies, the young men of the tribe painted themselves with white and red ochre. They came out in line, dancing



As a native affairs officer, Kyle-Little was responsible for welfare in the Arnhem Land Reserve. His territory is shown black on the inset of Australia

Natives who accompanied Kyle-Little travelled barefoot . . . through the harsh, rocky country and along the dangerous mangrove swamps

and stamping, a pace forward, two backward, three forward, one back, all the time with their hands held rigidly by their sides.

The music went faster and faster until the beating sticks sounded like the rattle of kettle-drums. The dancers formed in line, lifting their knees high, all in time, faster and faster.

A long wailing *poooommmmmph* from the didgeridoos was the signal for the dancers to drop to the kneeling position. They all carried woomeras, and now they raised them to their shoulders like rifles while the orchestra sticks went *tat, tat, tat*.

USING Narlebar as an interpreter, I questioned one of the tribal leaders, who said that the dance was the story of a legend handed down from father to son. Many, many years before, a ship had anchored off Skirmish Point, a couple of miles from where we were now camped. Men from the ship had come ashore in red jackets, carrying what the old man now knew to be guns. When the curious tribe came down to the beach to inspect the strangers, the sailors jumped back into their boat and rowed to the ship.

The natives were greatly intrigued when they heard a loud explosion on the ship and saw a big cloud of white smoke. Something hurtled to the shore from the ship and knocked over a young sapling, and all the natives rushed to look at it. One man who tried to pick it up burned his hands and howled in pain. Leaving him to nurse his own injuries, the others went back to the beach and were in time to see another cloud of smoke and a ball land in the sea and, hissing and spluttering, run up the beach.

There were no more explosions, the old man said, but there were smaller noises on the ship and some men on the beach were knocked down and bled, though no one could see any spears.

Having entertained themselves with the red jacket dance, the tribesmen continued their corroboree until four o'clock in the morning, and I fell asleep to the unmelodious *poomph* of the didgeridoos and the songs of the song-man.

The following day, Oondabund found three likely-looking characters to act as bearers. I told them I wanted to go to the headwaters of the Liverpool River, contacting all tribal groups in the region north of the "debil debil" country. I also told them I wanted to find Jiminmulla and the murderers.

The patrol boys collected their fighting and fishing spears and, at 11.30 a.m., in three canoes, two large and one small, we set off.

That night I cut my foot badly on a mangrove root, and a large splinter embedded itself between my toes. I danced about in pain, and was on my swag, trying vainly to inspect the damage by firelight, when an extremely venomous spider fell from the branches of a tree and bit me on the lip. In seconds my lip swelled up and the whole lower part of my face was sore. I lay for most of the night in pain, unable to sleep, with a throbbing toe and a throbbing face.

Worn out and irritable, I called the boys long before daybreak for another early start. We left the main course of the Liverpool River and entered Muralidaban Creek. After three hours the jungle closed in on us and the creek became too narrow for us to continue. We dragged the canoes up the bank, divided the supplies among the carriers into two lots and, having given the carriers their first load, plunged into the mangrove swamps.

The country we entered after leaving the swamp was truly glorious open grassland, park-like, with clumps of eucalyptus and other trees, and with many scattered billabongs.

This was Muralidaban—and it might have been the well-ordered acres of a rich country home, so serene and pleasant was the scene. The grass was short and, despite the season, green, and everywhere there were wallabies, kangaroos and birds.

On the water of the first billabong that we reached there were half a dozen big crocodiles. All of them were fourteen to sixteen feet long, the blackest and most menacing looking creatures I had ever encountered.

I called a halt here, for my foot was becoming too painful to bear my weight and my face felt as if it had been injected with the most virulent of poisons.

The boys had gone back for the remaining stores and I filled in the time by lighting a fire and boiling the billy. I had watched the crocodiles from the bank without attracting any attention and I was almost careless in my approach when I went down for water. I had just filled the billy when I looked up and saw two crocodiles coming fast for me on the surface. I hobbled up the bank, spilling half the water, while the crocodiles swished underneath me and turned and casually cruised along the edge of

Continued on page 45

Aborigines "paint up" before a corroboree and (below) one of them smokes a home-made pipe. Only the men take part in corroboree dancing: the women keep time by clapping

The Girl in the White Dress

by N. J. CRISP

ILLUSTRATED BY FANCETT

Allan could find only one thing wrong with Christine: the Group Captain was her father

PILOT OFFICER ALLAN HARTINGTON feverishly fiddled with his electric razor. It hummed reassuringly enough but, when applied to his face, refused to make any impression on his overnight beard.

It was coming up to half past eight, and he swore at the wicked luck that had caused him to oversleep on this of all mornings. He rang again for the batman without any real hope of getting any answer so late.

When reduced to its component parts, the razor revealed that its cutter was broken. Allan stroked his bristles ruefully. He wondered if the Group Captain would notice them, and decided that he would.

As a new arrival, he had been put in the hutted transit mess for the night, and none of the adjoining rooms was occupied. With mounting depression he pulled out all the drawers and examined the washbasins. He found some pieces of soap, a photograph of somebody's girl, some old newspapers, a button and a frayed collar. In desperation he extended his search to the bathroom, and it was there, peering under a bath, that he found treasure—a forgotten razor, which boasted a rusty, evil-looking blade.

Allan carried it back to his room, soaped his face and, wincing, scraped the horrid object across his cheeks. The result wasn't very satisfactory, but there was no time for refinements. He pulled on his cap, remembered his gloves and dashed outside.

He was still in time, he reflected as he climbed into his old car and pressed the starter button. Nothing happened. He tried again, and then pressed the horn. Not a sound. That dud cell in the battery had finally let him down.

Two minutes of frantic cranking with the starting handle showed him that there wasn't even enough juice to provide a spark—and station headquarters were nearly a mile from the officers' mess.

He started to walk, hoping that someone would come along and give him a lift, but no vehicle appeared. In the end he abandoned his dignity and began to run.

Allan slowed to a panting walk as he went past the guardroom and returned the corporal's salute. But a glimpse of the big clock, which showed nine o'clock, galvanized him into a sprint and, ignoring the corporal's astonished gaze, he dashed across the lawns, leaped across a flowerbed and slithered through the door of the station headquarters. The station adjutant's door was open. Allan went in, saluted and said: "Pilot Officer Hartington."

The adjutant looked at him oddly. He said: "The Group Captain is waiting. Come on."

Allan wiped the sweat off his face, followed the adjutant into the C.O.'s office and saluted

again. The adjutant said: "Pilot Officer Hartington, sir," and withdrew. During the long silence that followed, Allan had ample time to study the craggy face and the flinty glare which gave no indication of welcome.

The Group Captain said: "You are a Hunter pilot?"

"Yes, sir."

"How many hours?"

"Seven-hundred, sir."

"It's extraordinary what the air force can do these days. I would never have believed," Group Captain Taplow said icily, "that a man who was unable to read could become a pilot."

"Read, sir?" Allan said.

"Go over to the window and see if you can decipher the characters on the notice outside."

Allan stepped to the window and looked down. He said unwillingly: "Keep off the grass."

"Such requests do not, you feel, apply to you?"

"I'm sorry, sir. I was late. I didn't see it."

"You have some excellent reasons, no doubt?"

"No, sir."

"At least we are spared the usual excuses. Now, Hartington, did you manage to find time to shave this morning?"

Allan began to perspire again. He wondered if the air force was his proper vocation after all.

"In a way, sir," he said.

"I do like my officers to shave in the morning," the Group Captain said plaintively. "Your face looks like a ploughed field." He added sharply: "Shave yourself decently before tonight. There's a ball in the officers' mess."

"Yes, sir."

"I usually welcome young officers," Taplow said, by way of summing up, "but in your case. . . ." He substituted a glare for words. "You arrive here late, dishevelled and unshaven. You trample across my gardens, which are known to be the best tended in the group. I am not favourably impressed, Hartington. I propose to see you again at a later date, by which time I hope you will have shown me that my first impressions are mistaken."

"Yes, sir."

Allan saluted and returned shakily to the adjutant's office. The adjutant said dryly: "The boss relies a good deal on first impressions."

"Oh, Lord. . . ."

By the evening, Allan was beginning to feel a little better. His squadron commander, Squadron Leader Fennie, proved to be a likeable man who found his account of his first morning amusing rather than disastrous. He had laughed and said: "The old boy's decent enough. Pull your weight and he won't hold it against you."

"I'll try."

"You'll have to watch your step though. Try and keep out of his way for a while."

"I'll tread like a fairy."

Bending down to look in the mirror, Allan knotted his bow tie. He would put in an appearance at the ball, keep out of the Group Captain's way and go to bed early.

He was getting used now to the transformation which an officers' mess underwent when there was a ball, but it still fascinated him. The solid leather armchairs had disappeared. Coloured lights cast a soft glow, bars had mushroomed and streamers waved gently. Fountains played in the most unlikely places.

Round all this milled a chattering, laughing throng of officers and their ladies. Allan thought it a pleasing sight. He was about to move to the nearest bar when he stopped, thunderstruck. His eyes had fallen on the most beautiful girl he had ever seen in his life.

She was standing quite still, her hands folded in front of her, a gold evening bag held loosely

Someone bumped Allan violently in the back. Half the tomato juice shot out of the glass and splashed over Group Captain Taplow

in one hand. Her strapless, pure-white evening dress flared out from the waist. Her perfect face was framed by a mass of corn-coloured hair.

He nudged himself into action. It was his duty as a member of the mess to see that the guests were looked after. He approached her and said nervously: "Can I fetch you anything?"

"Actually, I think my father is . . ." she began. Then she smiled at Allan in a way that set his heart thudding. "But he has been rather a long time. Do you think I could have a tomato juice?"

She could have the whole earth if she wished it.

"Just wait here," Allan said happily. "Don't move."

He burrowed his way into the throng surrounding the bar, grabbed the nearest barman and procured a tomato juice. But getting out of the heaving crowd wasn't so easy. He had nearly reached safety when someone bumped violently into his back. He stumbled forward and managed to keep half the tomato juice in the glass.

The other half shot out and trickled stickily down the front of an immaculate, beribboned mess jacket.

"I'm most frightfully sorry," Allan said to the owner of the jacket. Then he saw that the face above it belonged to Group Captain Taplow, and the apology dried in his throat under the infuriated basilisk glare.

"Hartington, how would you like to be posted to a training unit?" the Group Captain asked softly.

"Not at all, sir," Allan mumbled.

"Then watch your step, young man. I have only known you a short time, and already I find myself growing tired of you."

"Yes, sir."

The vision was still where he had left her. Almost unable to believe his luck, Allan pressed the remains of the tomato juice into her hand. His senses were reassembling themselves after the fracas with the Group Captain, and it occurred to him that she had mentioned her father. Since everyone else appeared to be either blind or preoccupied with their own girls, he might be able to monopolize her for the whole evening.

Suddenly Allan heard an all too familiar voice again.

"Sorry I've been so long with this tomato juice, Christine," said Group Captain Taplow, "but some blithering lunatic. . . ." He regarded Allan with cold dislike. "Do I understand that you have been introduced to Pilot Officer Hartington?"

"Yes, Daddy," said Christine. "I thought you were busy, and Mr. Hartington was kind enough to get me a drink."

"H'm," grunted Taplow. "Would you mind trying to find your mother, my dear? I can't see her, and I want her to meet the Air Commodore."

With Christine gone, Allan and the Group Captain eyed each other. Allan could see no profit in initiating a conversation.

"I am beginning to wonder," said the Group Captain, "if you represent some sort of cross which it is my fate to shoulder."

Allan had no doubt that there must be a snappy answer to that one somewhere, if he could have thought of it.

"However," said the Group Captain, "I am not a man who accepts his fate calmly. I can think of all sorts of ways, varying in unpleasantness, in which I could relieve myself of the burden. For a beginning, it will please me if you and my family do not meet socially. I hope for your sake that you take my meaning accurately."

Allan watched the bristling figure turn and disappear into the crowd. A hand appeared in front of him, holding a glass.

"You look as if you could use a whisky," said Squadron Leader Fennie.

"Thanks," said Allan.

"The old man watches Christine like an anxious hen."

"What a wonderful girl!" Allan said.

"Now just a minute. You'll be asking for trouble if——"

"Trouble?" Allan said vaguely.

Fennie sighed. "Let's find a quiet corner. I want to talk to you."

Quiet corners were not very common that night, but luckily there was a general move towards the food. Fennie and Allan found a seat on a radiator. Fennie said: "I don't like trouble in my squadron, and there'd be a hell of a lot if you hung around Christine."

"I'm not going to hang around her," Allan said. "I just want to know her better."

"If you intend ignoring straight talking from

Over breaks for cups of tea and hurried cigarettes between scenes they talked. Allan was, incredibly, getting to know Christine

the Group Captain——" Fennie broke off and sighed again at the look on Pilot Officer Hartington's face. "But I suppose nothing I say will have any effect."

Allan grinned. "I'm sorry. If it was anything else, sir. . . ."

"It's just that I dislike losing men who might make reasonable pilots."

"I hope it doesn't come to that."

"You have more optimism than sense. Ah, well. You wouldn't be in the air force otherwise, I suppose." Fennie slapped his pockets, produced a cigarette and lit it. "We'll change the subject. Ever done any acting?"

"No," Allan said, surprised.

"We've a very active dramatic society on the station. I've been doing it for years."

Allan nodded politely.

"The thing is," Fennie went on, "that there's a part open in the play we're doing at the moment. The chap who was doing it has been taken ill, and it's put us in rather a hole because the damn thing goes on in just over four weeks. I wonder whether you would like to have a crack at it."

"But I've had no experience at all——"

"We're not looking for repertory actors, you know—just people who don't mind working hard. It's quite rewarding. You happen to look like this particular part. You needn't commit yourself. Come along to rehearsal on Monday and have a look at us."

"I don't know that there'd be any point in it. . . ."

Fennie laughed shortly: "You *are* a tactful young man. You've done nothing but upset the station commander since you arrived. Your squadron commander asks you to do something and you turn him down flat." He stood up. "Tell me, Hartington—do you expect to get very far in the air force?"

Allan's cheeks began to burn. "I'm sorry, sir. I didn't mean to be rude. I'd be very glad to have a go."

"That's better. You can only make an ass of yourself, and you ought to be pretty used to that. . . ."

OVER the weekend it began to dawn on Allan that resolving to meet Christine again and doing anything about it were two different things. She clearly wouldn't wander about the station, so that another chance meeting was unlikely. With the Group Captain's warning in mind, he knew the more obvious gambits were out of the question. In the end he decided that ladies' night was the only possibility, although presumably her father would be there, too. He couldn't see much future in that.

Monday was taken up with settling in and flying for the first time with his new squadron. Fennie said: "Have an early dinner and I'll pick you up at the mess afterwards. Civilian clothes, of course. . . ."

And later, on the way to the hall, Fennie told Allan: "You did quite well today, considering that you haven't flown with us before."

"Thank you, sir."

"I want you to try and fit in as quickly as possible. There's a big exercise at the end of the month. Exercise Canback. I'm determined that my squadron shan't carry any cans."

They went into the hall and up on to the stage, where a group of people were sitting and standing around, talking. "Hallo, Mike," Fennie said to a man in shirt and slacks. "This is my new prospect, Allan Hartington. Mike is our producer."

"Nice to have you, Allan," said Mike.

"I think you know our leading lady," Fennie said.

Christine came over and said: "We didn't see any more of you on Friday."

Allan gulped, groped helplessly for words. At last he said: "I turned in early."

Mike said: "If you're ready, we'll try a reading." He pushed a script into Allan's hands and led him on to the stage. "All right," he said, peering across the footlights at the rest of the cast, "there's been enough nattering. Give these two a chance." He pushed a finger into Allan's script. "Christine begins here. You follow on."

Allan rapidly scanned the page, trying to get the meaning of the scene. His panic had gone, and he was hugging his good luck. He didn't intend to miss the opportunities presented by four weeks of rehearsals.

He said: "Whenever you're ready."

Christine read: "'You haven't congratulated me.'"

"'On what?'"

"'On my forthcoming marriage.'"

"'I'll give you my condolences if you like.'"

"'Is that meant to be funny?'"

"'Not particularly. There's nothing amusing about the thought of any woman marrying Martin Dexter.'"

"'You're not very loyal to your employer.'"

"'I work for Martin for the only thing in this world he understands. Money. It buys all sorts of things. Loyalty isn't one of them. If another woman married Martin, I should think it a disaster. If you marry him it will be a tragedy.'"

"'I shouldn't be listening to this.'"

Allan fumbled with the page, and turned it over. "'You may as well let me finish.'" Suddenly the words he was reading seemed to come alive. "'When I first saw you, I—well, never mind about that. I hardly dared let myself think of you as a woman, because you seemed so far . . . so far above and beyond me, if you like. But Martin . . . he's hard and ruthless and greedy. I tell you that he will degrade you—destroy you.'"

Mike stood up and walked across the stage. "Fine," he said. "You read that as if you really meant it."

"That was very good," Christine said.

Allan turned a bright shade of pink. . . .

Allan was happy. He was, incredibly, getting to know Christine, over hurried cigarettes between scenes, breaks for cups of tea, and long discussions when rehearsals were finished. Each day when there was no rehearsal was empty, and each rehearsal came and vanished all too quickly.

He grew to know the cool blue eyes that lit up with sudden amusement, that she took one spoonful of sugar in tea, and smoked little. He also found that he wanted to talk to her about everything or anything. They laughed easily, and fitted together like a pair of gloves.

His flying went well. He grafted himself on to the squadron and Fennie nodded approvingly. . . .

They were keyed up for Exercise Canback when Fennie came in to the mess one day and

Continued on page 36

The Group Captain exclaimed: "Do you expect the air force to come to a stop while I discuss my family with a pilot officer?"

Spangles–smart as new paint in their gay new packets

ALWAYS FRESH ★ CLEAN ★ FULL OF FLAVOUR

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In an upside-down nest in the earth where princesses are stuck to the ceiling . . .

It's a woman's world for the wasp

by JOHN CROMPTON

The Common Wasp . . . only the females have stings

DRAWINGS BY ERIC SAUNDERS

ONE morning in late October, I noticed a large insect clinging to the bathroom curtain. It was a handsome creature, and if its colour scheme of glaring yellow and black was on the crude side, so was that of the curtain, which depicted an assortment of fishes never known in Nature. It was a queen wasp starting to hibernate; and, as always when I see a queen wasp, I was in doubt. I ought to kill her: this queen might mean a nest of several thousand brigands next summer. But, as usual, I did not. Instead, I told my wife to let her stay there.

I had never had a queen hibernate in the house before, although I had seen them on sacks or thatch in sheds and barns. But two days later I found another in the folds of my study curtain, as still and set as a brooch. Both were of the species known as "German."

Neither of these queens was molested. The whole household became interested in them as, week after week, they hung there by their jaws, dead to the world.

They stayed for about five months and then, one day in late March, were gone. A heart-breaking task lay before them. . . .

There are more than ten thousand species of wasps in the world, but the majority of these are "solitary" wasps, leading individual lives. They are found mostly in hot, dry areas, though there are more than a hundred species in Britain. My queens, however, were of a species that forms communities—"social" wasps. These belong mostly to the genus *Vespa* and inhabit the northern temperate parts of the world.

There are seven "social" species in Britain and, with one exception, they are similar in size and appearance. The exception is the hornet, that large, chocolate-and-gold insect which usually nests in hollow trees, and, contrary to general belief, is the meekest and mildest of the wasps—though when it does sting the pain is exceptionally severe and can be dangerous.

Two species predominate, the Common Wasp and the German Wasp. Then there are the Red Wasp (which is not red, but yellow and black like the others, though in some individuals a rufous tinge may be found in the abdomen and legs), the Norwegian Wasp and the Tree Wasp. The seventh species is the Cuckoo Wasp, which makes no nest, and lays its eggs in the nest of the Red Wasp.

THE Norwegian Wasp invariably nests in the open, in gooseberry bushes or ivy or under porches. The Red Wasp and the Tree Wasp may nest underground or in trees, but the Common Wasp and the German Wasp always nest underground, and the first task of the queen, when she leaves her winter quarters, is to build a nest.

Before she can start, however, she must feed. She has gone without food or drink for five or six months so she cannot be blamed for flitting among the flowers for a few days, gathering nectar. But this dawdling is quickly over and soon she is house hunting, quartering banks and ditches, every now and then alighting and searching in the wet grass for some hole or crevice. She finds several, but, with feminine pernicketiness, rejects them after prolonged examination.

At last, one catches her fancy and she gets to work. She hollows out a small chamber at the far end, carrying away each bit of excavated earth in her mouth and depositing it at some distance from the site. After several hours of work she flies off, alights on an oak gatepost, or something similar, and begins to gnaw at it, collecting the fibre and mixing it with her saliva into a pellet, which she takes back to the hole. This is her building material. All the common wasps except the hornet use the pulp of sound wood; the hornet uses rotten wood.

Backwards and forwards goes the queen, bringing in pellets. Each is stuck on to others and fashioned until in time a wooden canopy appears and under it a platform containing a few more or less circular cells. These cells are upside down. A wasp's nest is always upside down and hangs from some root or other support above.

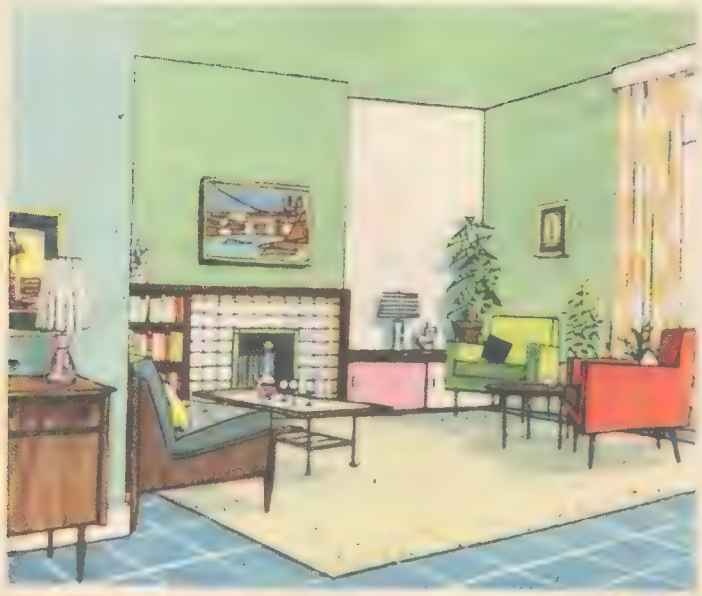
When she has made about four cells in the little platform the queen lays an egg in each. As the nest is upside down, the eggs have to be glued to the cells to prevent them from falling out. In a week the eggs hatch into grubs, which anchor themselves to the split eggs from which they have emerged. Later still, as they grow big, the grubs become wedged against the cell sides and are thus again prevented from falling out. The queen is now faced with still more work. The excavating, building, cell-making and laying must go on as before, but, in addition, there are mouths to feed, mouths that grow ever more hungry as the grubs increase in size and numbers. It is at this time that the queen wasp is most useful to man, for the grubs are fed on insects and the mother works great havoc among aphides and other insect pests.

The first-born grubs become very large and fat and greedy. Then, one by one, they stiffen and a covering forms round them, a sort of coffin. Inside this coffin they melt as if in decay. But later, through the shell, a vague outline, which looks like a waxen effigy of the mother, can be seen. Later still this form begins to colour and finally the chrysalis splits open and a limp creature emerges. It crawls on to the face of the comb, cleans itself like a cat and appears for what it is—a worker wasp.

WORKER wasps are merely barren, stunted females. How this class, the most important in the nest, comes about is not known, but there is evidence to assume that, as with bees, special feeding is needed to produce true females. Some workers, however, probably due to over-stimulating food in the grub stage, can and do lay eggs. These eggs, being unfertilized, always give rise to males.

The queen's ordeal is nearing its end. When about ten workers have emerged she "hands over." Henceforward she will have no more

Crompton has ranged the world in search of fascinating wild life. Now he and his wife study the subject at their Kent cottage



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work to do, no excavating, building, feeding. All she will have to do is to lay eggs and forget about them.

The workers get busy, and as their numbers increase so does the size of the nest. Operations are soon on a large scale. Hundreds, then thousands of workers dig into the soil and carry away the earth in their mouths. Others dismantle the nest and rebuild it. Large platforms appear, covered with cells. Forests of pillars grow, supporting other platforms. The nest becomes crowded with eggs and grubs, and with nurses feeding the grubs.

Baby wasps must pay for their keep and food. Payment takes the shape of a drop of sticky fluid which the grub exudes after receiving its minced fly or other rations. This drop the nurse licks up eagerly. If, after feeding, a grub makes no payment the nurse shakes it savagely by the head until it does.

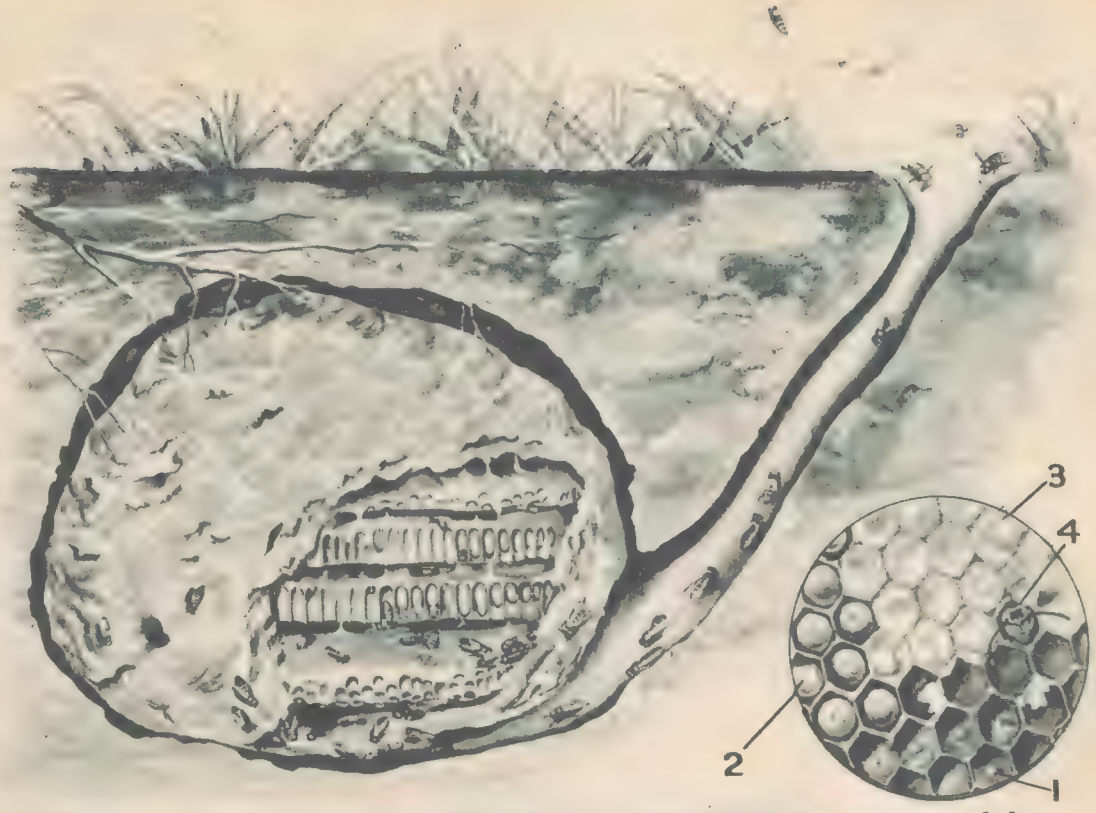
Wasp grubs eat practically nothing but insects. The adults eat both meat and sweets. The meat consists chiefly of insects, but they are not above descending on the Sunday joint and chewing at it until they have a bellyful of meat juice. This does no harm to the joint, and butchers and fishmongers like to have them around for they kill or chase off the flies and bluebottles that *do* harm meat. As for their sweets—jam, marmalade, honey, sugar, tarts, alcoholic or soft drinks, stewed or ripe fruit—there is no end.

In their search for food, the workers may fly a mile or more from the nest but, returning home, they come with certainty, making straight for the small aperture. Wasps have no homing sense, but they note the country and memorize landmarks. A wasp leaving the nest on its first excursion orientates the entrance by flying round in an intricate pattern, noting the position from every quarter. Later, it journeys farther afield, but always uses known landmarks to guide its return. This has been proved by hundreds of experiments. It is impossible to know which particular marks they use, but sometimes a good guess can be made. The removal of a stone has often prevented a solitary wasp from finding its nest, even after searching for hours. As soon as the stone is replaced it finds the nest immediately.

Inside the nest wasps are much more casual and happy-go-lucky than the scrupulously clean bees. A subterranean wasps' nest has a space all round the sides of about one inch, but the space at the bottom is deeper and forms a pit into which fall the dead bodies and other refuse from above. No effort is made to clean out this midden, which would soon become offensive but for the *Pegomyia* fly. Normally, any fly going anywhere near a wasps' nest is set on and killed, but *Pegomyia* is allowed to enter without hindrance and lay her eggs, which live on the refuse. Another fly that is allowed to enter the nest is *Volucella,* which, in size and colouring, is rather like a wasp herself.

AUTUMN approaches. Autumn is the time when worker wasps must die. But strangely, there is now renewed building activity. At the base of the nest new cells are being made and these cells are larger than the previous ones. The mother, that ageing, worn-out creature, is led to these cells and lays an egg in each. The eggs hatch and the grubs grow and pupate as did the others, but the developed insects that emerge are a new type, larger and more handsome than their worker sisters. These are the princesses, or true females, and the males. The only superficial difference between males and females is that the females have straight antennae and the males have long, wavy ones.

The new arrivals do not stay long. They do not like the workers and brush them aside contemptuously when they meet. The workers obviously do not like them, and sometimes there are scuffles. So the males and females go off. There are still flowers bearing honey and pollen to give them food and they lead a butterfly existence.



What a wasps' nest looks like—a sectional drawing, showing the ground entrance and the arrangement of the platforms and cells. Inset: the four stages in the birth of a wasp. 1, the egg laid in a cell; 2, the grub; 3, the chrysalis; 4, the young wasp emerging

After mating, the females leave their playgrounds and seek retreats for hibernation. The males still hang around, gathering together on what flowers there are. They possess no sting and can be handled with impunity. But they have performed their one and only function, by fertilizing the females. Nature has no further use for them. They lack the remarkable resistance to cold possessed by the queens and a few severe nights kill them all off.

Meanwhile, in the wasp citadel, grim scenes are taking place.

With the departure of the males and females discipline breaks. An unruly spirit comes over the workers until the day when they break into the nurseries, tear the young from their cradles and eat them alive. The mother is probably dead already.

That is the end. Cold kills off the workers as well as the males, the nest falls into mouldy decay and the only hope for the future of the race of *Vespa* lies in a few queens hanging motionless from sacks and curtains.

Personally, though I admire their efficiency, vitality and courage, I dislike worker wasps. This is because I used to keep bees. I not only kept bees, I loved them, and wasps are the yellow peril of bees. They are stronger, bolder and more active. Bees coming back to the hive heavily laden with honey are in no condition to fight, and it is then that wasps descend savagely on them, bite them in half at the waist and fly off with honey-filled bodies, leaving the alighting board and the ground around covered with writhing halves of severed bees. Every season I tracked wasps to their nests and destroyed the nests, but it never seemed to make much difference.

What impressed me on these punitive expeditions was the non-aggressive nature of wasps towards human beings. The wasp has none of the damn-the-consequences fury of the angry honey bee that, when it means business, comes at you like a pellet from a gun. Indeed, I became almost contemptuous of wasps, even though I had been stung often enough in my time.

The chemical composition of the poison that wasps and bees inject is a trade secret of those insects. Scientists know a little, but not very much, of the complicated formula. Many people think that the sting of the wasp is acid and that of the bee alkaline, or vice versa. Actually both are acid.

So if anything is applied to the wound after a sting it should be an alkaline fluid, of which there are several in the shops. None of them does any good really, for the poison is already in the tissues, but they may well have a cooling effect on the skin and may have a psychological value.

IT is often possible to see a hair-like thread darting in and out at the base of the abdomen of a wasp, especially when it is annoyed. This is generally thought to be the sting, but it is only the sheath—or "director"—of the sting. The sting itself, in the shape of two lancets, is housed inside. When the wasp stings, the director pierces the victim's skin. Only then does the real sting come into play, and the two lancets shoot out from an aperture at the base of the director. They are concave and when joined together form a pipe through which the poison, squeezed from the glands by powerful muscles, is forced at pressure.

On one occasion I found the honey shed—where I stored combs before extraction—full of wasps. This made me see red. Wasps had been plaguing my bees for weeks, and now they were taking all my honey. I closed the small opening they had used and set to work with a swatter. I mowed those wasps down as they fought and struggled against the walls and windows, and they offered no more retaliation than flies.

Then things changed. It was not just *one* wasp that attacked, but the whole lot almost simultaneously—and there were still hundreds left. Soon I was covered with infuriated insects, all stinging, or ing to.

The explanation of this concerted attack lies, I think, in the nature of the social insects, whose whole scheme of life depends on the understanding and co-operation of thousands of individuals. I have noticed that bees, in particular, can communicate news or states of mind to their 50,000 or so fellow workers in a matter of seconds. The wasps in my honey shed may well all have come from the same nest. One of them, after prolonged chivvying, changed its attitude from panic to anger and this change was almost immediately communicated to the rest. Something rather similar occasionally happens even with humans when we gather together in numbers and come under the influence of mob psychology.

THE END

She halted and stepped back. "Why do you have to be so dramatic?" Emily said. "Striding out of the mountains, with mist all over your clothes!"

Far, far the mountain peak

by JOHN MASTERS

ILLUSTRATED BY EDWIN PHILLIPS

At last he knew the truth. . . . Never again would he lead men to destruction. He could be Peter Savage no longer

PETER SAVAGE pushed his way through the khaki-clad crowds on Victoria Station. He had to get to Emily. He had to explain the way of Gerry's death. . . . He would have to tell Gerry's sister Peggy the details, too.

Peggy was alone, now that her husband, Harry Walsh, was in the thick of the fighting in France. Peter wondered if she still hated him for marrying Emily instead of her. . . .

"Taxi!"

Jolting towards the Fenton house in Minden Square, Peter thought of what he would say to Emily. She'd almost married Gerry, the Earl of Wilcot, years ago. When Peter asked Gerry to come with him on a special mission—a reconnaissance of the Austro-Italian frontier—she'd accused him of exploiting Gerry's loyalty.

And she said that if anything happened to Gerry she would never forgive him. It was now ten weeks since Gerry was killed in a clash with an enemy patrol. How had Emily taken the news? He would soon see. . . .

Peter found Emily's father, Mr. Fenton, with *The Times* open at the casualty lists. His greeting was cold. "Emily's gone away," he said.

"Gone away? What do you mean, sir?" Peter said. He felt suddenly afraid.

"She left a letter for you. There, in the top left-hand drawer of the writing desk."

Peter found the letter and tore it open. It was very brief: "Dear Peter, I am going away, with the children, because I cannot bear to see you or speak to you again. Do not make any attempt to find me, or see the children, ever. . . ."

PART FIVE

Private Smith Goes To War

THE letter was dated August 2. That would be a week or so after the War Office heard of Gerry's death. Peter had wondered vaguely why he had not received any letters from Emily; but the mails to Italy were very bad, and they had moved him from one hospital to another.

He turned to Mr. Fenton. "You know where she is," he said.

Mr. Fenton said: "Yes. I know."

"Will you tell me, sir?"

"No, Peter. I'm sorry."

Peter said: "I am going to find her, sir, whether you help me or not—if necessary, through the police."

"Don't do that, it's no use."

But Peter said: "Goodbye, sir," picked up his bag and went out into the street.

He hailed a taxi. "Two-ninety-three Nashe Street, Kensington," he said. That was his grandfather's house. He didn't know why he was going there or what he would say when he arrived. Perhaps Grandfather was dead, too.

He arrived, and the taxi puttered off along the darkening street. The door was unlocked and he let himself in. He opened the door into the drawing-room and saw his grandfather in a high-backed chair, *The Times* fallen on his lap, opened at those same stark casualty lists.

"Another D.S.O.," Grandfather said. "There's nothing wrong with my eyes, thank God. Where did you get it?"

"The Italian Alps, Grandfather," he said. "Emily's left me." He shouted that very loud, because he didn't want to repeat it.

"I know," the old man said, looking at him suddenly with such keenness that all the marks of age ceased to have any importance. "Emily brought the children here on July twenty-ninth and told me she was leaving you. She did not say why. She obtained my promise not to tell you. I gave it, since it had only been a courteous gesture that had sent her to me at all. She knew I would like to see the children again before I die."

Peter said: "She must hold me responsible for Gerry's death. I can't think of anything else."

The old general said: "Your father—my son—left your mother." Peter knew that, of course, and had always held it bitterly against his father. No one had ever talked much about it. His mother had died when he was ten.

His grandfather said: "It was not because he

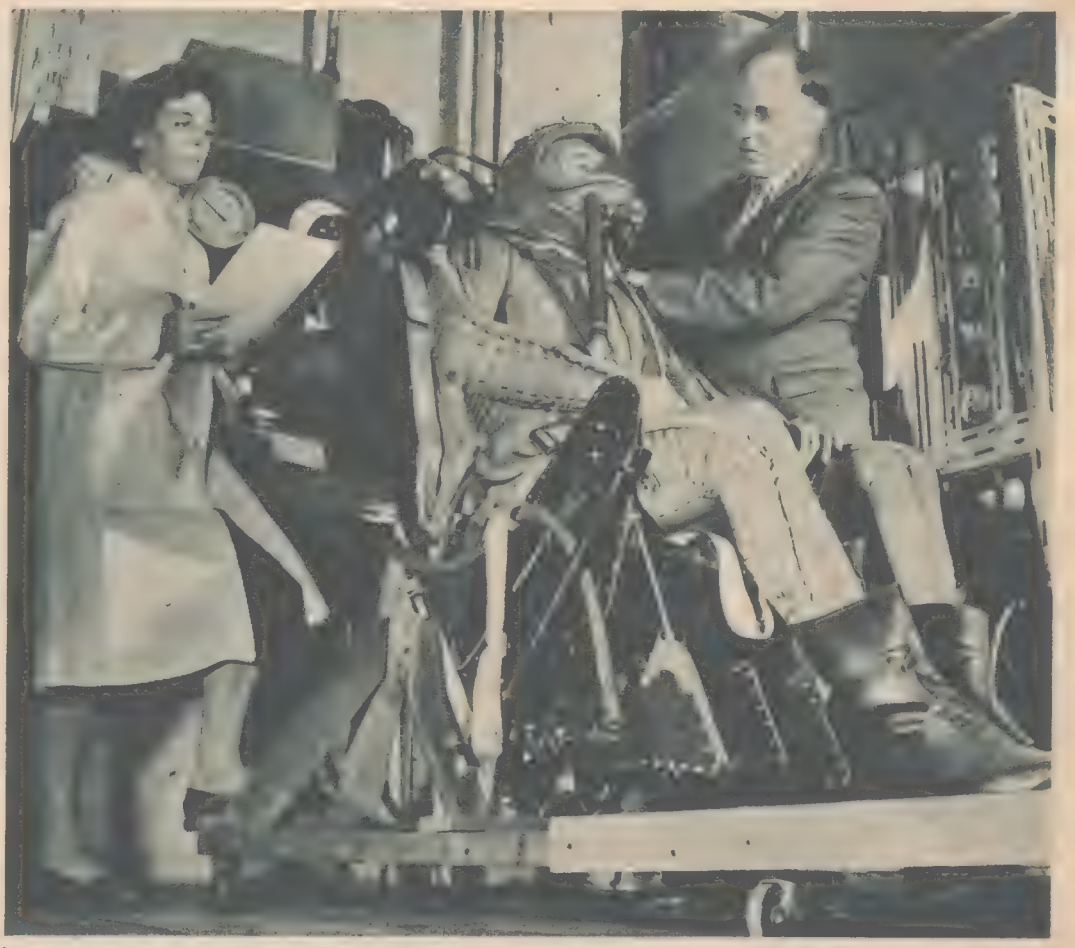
Continued on page 37

Emily pushed back her chair and stood to face Peggy. "You hate me, don't you?" she said

Dressed to live

by DON EVERITT

Walter Oldham designs suits that defy danger. He stops airmen from boiling to death — and cuts clothes for wear on the moon



A pressure suit is adjusted by Oldham. A man wearing it could survive in outer space

ON a flight from Blackbushe, Hampshire, to Khartoum, a Hermes airliner made a forced landing at night in the Mediterranean. The Italian inquiry into the accident heard that the fifty-seven occupants of the aircraft shared fifty-four lifesaving jackets. It heard also that the aircraft officially carried no jackets for four young children because "they were not occupying separate seats."

These facts appear in a report issued by the International Civil Aviation Organization, which adds: "Although some evidence indicated that two dinghies were on board [for the children], there was conflicting evidence that they were not on board. In any case, dinghies were not released or used."

The Hermes floated for ten minutes and its occupants leaped into the sea. Sicilian fishermen rescued fifty of them. The other seven, including four children aged one to five, drowned. The parents lost their grip on the children when they entered the water. In the darkness, they disappeared.

For flights beyond gliding distance of land, British airliners, like those of other countries, carry no adequate lifesaving equipment for babies and young children. By regulation, they carry lifesaving devices for every passenger, whatever his age, but the standard jacket will not properly fit a small child.

Since the Hermes accident, a serious young Lancastrian engineer named Walter Oldham and a doctor, John Gabb, have worked to prevent a recurrence of the disaster. Oldham heads the development division of a Manchester firm manufacturing lifesaving and survival equipment; Gabb is the B.O.A.C. liaison officer at the R.A.F. Institute of Aviation Medicine, Farnborough. Together they have designed and perfected an emergency apparatus in which a baby can safely ride the high seas.

"We faced a triple problem," says Oldham. "We had to make the apparatus small enough to pass inflated with the baby in it through an aircraft escape hatch; we had to make it stable; and we had to give the baby complete protection from the sea, wind and outside temperature."

The design began as a rubber cone with a plastic visor. Gabb rejected it on the ground that an infant lying in the apex of the cone could turn over and suffocate easily. During the next two years, the two men produced six more prototypes, including "a Moses basket with inflatable outriggers." Their final approved version, an enclosed cot with a large plastic observation window, remained afloat and upright throughout high-speed tests behind a launch in the Solent. It contained an accurately weighted doll.

THE Air Registration Board has approved the design in principle, and several aviation authorities believe that the cot will soon become an enforced requirement on airliners. Oldham says: "A survival cot for each baby in an aircraft or ship is as necessary as a lifejacket for each adult."

Oldham's employers, P. Frankenstein and Sons, who developed the cot as a private venture, have specialized since the beginning of the last war in producing clothing to protect men from hazards. "The firm came into the business to make anti-exposure suits for the fighter pilots who flew from catapults on merchant ships on Atlantic and Arctic convoys. Once in the air, the men nearly always had to ditch after engaging the enemy. In the icy water, many died in a few minutes. The suits made here took the suicidal element out of those missions."

Today, this century-old firm, which formerly made only rainwear and rubber-proofed clothes, now devotes more than two-thirds of its output to protective clothing.

Not long ago, the Canadian lumber industry asked the firm to design a lifesaving jacket to meet the special needs of the boom men who ride on the logs down the rivers.

"If they suddenly lose their balance, the men often strike their heads on logs, fall unconscious into the water, and are drowned," says Oldham. "We had to make a jacket which would inflate automatically in water but would not inflate in heavy rain. We also had to make it light and not cumbersome so that the men would get accustomed to wearing it without giving it a second thought."

Oldham turned out an inflatable stole folded and press-studded on to a light harness. At the back a gas cylinder weighing only a quarter of a pound has a salt plug which melts instantly in water and releases a firing pin.

"We fold the stole round the cylinder to protect the salt plug from rain. The jacket has been a great success."

The Frankenstein protective clothing factory at Birkenhead produces an average of two thousand jackets, suits, jerkins, waistcoats and dinghies a week. These sell to customers all over the world at prices ranging from £3 for the cheapest jacket to £180 for a new twelve-man dinghy. B.O.A.C., B.E.A. and other airlines have bought more than a hundred thousand Frankenstein lifesaving jackets.

For the atomic and chemical industries, the firm produces suits giving protection against radio-activity and dangerous acids and gases; for the fire services, it makes waterproofed and heat-resisting suits. Riggers on B.B.C. television masts wear suits specially designed by Oldham's department to keep out the wind and weather without impeding their mobility.

Oldham has fitted with high-altitude pressure suits about 350 civil, Ministry of Supply and R.A.F. test pilots, including John Cunningham of de Havilland's, Peter Twiss of Fairey Aviation, Walter Gibb of Bristol Aircraft, Roland Beamont of English Electric, and John Fifield of the Martin-Baker company.

"Walter Gibb and his navigator had reason to be thankful that they wore partial-pressure suits in the Canberra in which they broke the world altitude record."

On a preliminary flight, the Canberra's jet engines failed because of lack of oxygen. This instantly put the pressurizing equipment in the aircraft cabin out of action.

"At heights above sixty thousand feet," says Oldham, "the blood is likely to boil at normal body temperature." Unprotected, Gibb had about ten seconds to live. He told me that he

JOHN BULL PHOTOGRAPHS BY ARTHUR WHITTINGTON

Oldham's fifteen-month-old daughter Leslie tests a floating cot. In it a baby cast into the sea by an air crash would safely ride out a storm

felt considerably relieved when his suit inflated at the instant the cabin pressure failed. It applied an artificial pressure to his torso and gave him time to dive to a safe height at which he could restart the engines."

Oldham, who describes himself as half-tailor, half-engineer, has always to combine protection with comfort and ease of movement in the clothes he designs. The early partial-pressure suits for airmen were uncomfortable to wear normally and, when inflated, caused pain and bruising.

"We've improved on them now with jerkins and waistcoats. But they cover only the torso. They allow a man just enough time to get himself and his aircraft down safely from an emergency at no higher than, say, seventy thousand feet.

"At greater heights, a man needs a bespoke tailored pressure suit covering his whole body. In an emergency, he may have to live in the suit for hours. Or, on the moon, he'll want to climb out of his pressurized rocket and walk around. How do we give him comfort and freedom of movement in a one-piece suit which we inflate hard to create an artificial pressure?

"One firm tried to do it with a weighty suit with metal joints and seals. It was inclined to start vibrating in sympathy with the aircraft engine. We think we've done much better. With the Institute of Aviation Medicine, we've developed a suit in rubber, Terylene and nylon with expanding pleats at the joints. It has a plastic goldfish-bowl helmet. The Americans have asked for samples."

Whenever possible, Oldham and his colleagues test the new designs themselves. One icy day, the firm's chemist tried out a new submarine escape suit in a lake not far from the Manchester factory. To test a new lifesaving jacket for air assault troops, Oldham's heavily built assistant, Stewart Sullivan, put on sixty pounds of army equipment and leaped into the water. The factory manager tested an aircrew lifejacket in a swimming bath which had closed for the winter. "When he surfaced, he found the water coated with dead beetles which had collected over the previous months." Oldham adds: "I'm a particularly good subject for trials in water. I can't swim."

Oldham's collaborators, the doctors at the Institute of Aviation Medicine, the Royal Naval Air Medical School and similar establishments, put the garments through searching physiological tests. "When the Royal National Lifeboat Institution doctor wanted to test our lifeboat survival bag, he got up in the middle of a winter night, soaked himself and his pyjamas in cold water, and sat on the lawn for half an hour to create the effect of severe exposure. Then he climbed into the bag. Within fifteen minutes, he was warm and comfortable purely from the heat his body had generated in the bag."

In spite of such searching tests, faults in design occasionally appear when the lifesaving devices go into service. At an R.A.F. station, an airman's jacket failed to inflate during dinghy drill. The metal press-studs had corroded. As a result, Oldham's department produced an all-nylon press-stud.

"We've also devised a method of fastening buttons so that they will bear a man's weight. We've produced several tailoring inventions," he says. "For my part, the odd thing is that as a youngster in Rochdale I had no aspirations to be a tailor for spacemen or anyone else."

Oldham, who is thirty-two, started work at sixteen as an engineering apprentice. He became head of development at Frankenstein's at the age of twenty-eight. Now he has one overwhelming ambition. "We've had our space suits on planets on the screen. B.B.C. television and Pinewood Studios hired dud prototypes from us. I fully intend that when the first man does really reach the moon he will be wearing one of my suits." THE END

Leaning against the wall of the forge, Tansy watched. . . . There was young Dr. Danvers starting that petrol-engine

Tansy's Bluebells

Flowers were so ordinary. Jane preferred a man with new ideas—a pioneer!

by ROBERT HOLMES

It must have been in May, 1906, that Tansy Regan came back to the village; that year for certain, and some of the older villagers remember his arrival. He cadged a lift from Farmer Witham at Dimbury Station. Furthermore, he persuaded old Witham to stop the dog-cart by Dimbury Woods while he picked a huge posy of bluebells. That is why it must have been May, or early June, when Tansy arrived.

They came bowling up the High Street with Tansy almost hidden by his armful of bluebells. They stopped by the smithy and Tansy jumped down, hurried past the open-fronted forge, and ran up the path to the Kemps' house.

It was Jane Kemp who answered Tansy's knock. Slim, blue-eyed, black-haired, she stood and gazed in amazement at the profusion of bluebells growing from an otherwise faultless grey suit and elegant, striped waistcoat.

"Yes?" she said. "Who is it?"

Tansy lowered the bluebells and grinned. "It's me," he said.

Jane's eyes widened. "Tansy!" she breathed softly. "Tansy, you're back! But how . . . why didn't you write to me? You promised you would."

"But I did," Tansy said.

"One letter," Jane said. "Two years ago."

"And a postcard," Tansy reminded her.

"Oh, yes—and a postcard. Four years ago."

"Well," said Tansy, "I've only been away five years." He held out the bluebells. "And look what I've brought you."

Jane took them automatically. There was a wild expression in her eyes. She seemed to be having difficulty with her breathing. "Do you remember my fourteenth birthday?" she asked. "You were sixteen then. You brought me a posy of dog-daisies."

"That's right," Tansy said. He laughed at the memory.

"You went to America and you were coming back with a fortune," Jane went on sweetly. "Well, I don't mind that you haven't made a fortune. I don't mind that, Tansy Regan." Her voice gathered speed and volume. "But, now you're twenty-six, I do expect something better than a lot of smelly wild flowers."

And before Tansy could move he was bluebells from head to foot. The door slammed.

"Jane!" Tansy shouted. "Jane, come back." He hammered loudly on the door. He tried to force it open, but Jane had shot the bolt.

Tansy walked disconsolately away. There was a horse trough in front of the smithy, and he sat on one end of it for a time, thinking rueful thoughts.

He was still thinking them when Mr. Kemp, Jane's father, came out of the smithy. He stopped at the sight of Tansy. "Hallo, lad," he said. "You're back, then?"

"Yes," Tansy said. "I think so."

Mr. Kemp was staring at him with curiosity. "And what was America like?" he asked. "Lot of new-fangled ideas, eh?"

"Oh, lots," Tansy agreed.

"And new-fangled fashions, I daresay? Hairstyles and suchlike?"

"That's right."

Mr. Kemp sniffed. "Can't say I like them Yankee fenanigans," he said.

Tansy became aware of the direction of the

contraption of his. And there was Jane, sitting stiffly in the passenger seat with not so much as a glance for him

older man's gaze. He raised a hand to his hair and found a tiara of bluebells. He brushed them off hurriedly.

"Have you seen Jane yet?" Mr. Kemp asked.

Tansy winced. "Yes," he said sadly. "I've just been talking to her."

"Proud of that girl," Mr. Kemp said. "She'll make a fine wife for a doctor."

Tansy was startled. "For a *doctor*, did you say?"

"Young fellow with a practice in Dimbury," Mr. Kemp said complacently. "Comes to call on her nearly every day in one of those petrol-engine contraptions—nasty, noisy, stinking affairs, if you like. They ought to be banned. You can't beat the old horse and——"

Tansy took Mr. Kemp by the shoulders and shook him gently. "Is he courting Jane?" he asked.

"Well, he's trying," Mr. Kemp said. He sighed heavily. "She doesn't give him much encouragement, I must say, but she'll come round in time. They always do, you know."

"Hell!" Tansy said. He followed Mr. Kemp into the forge and looked gloomily about him. "Mr. Kemp," he said politely, "is there any chance of getting my old job back?"

"You know I'd be glad to have you back," Mr. Kemp said. He looked at Tansy thoughtfully. "Didn't make a fortune, eh? Well, it's not given to all of us, lad." He spoke as a man of substance, a master blacksmith with property in three surrounding villages. "When would you be wanting to start?"

"As soon as you like," Tansy said. "Tomorrow?"

"That'll suit." Mr. Kemp took out a big silver watch and glanced at it. "I see the Bull's open, if you feel like walking that way. . . ."

Tansy stayed at the inn that night; and the next day, still in his fine grey trousers but wearing one of Mr. Kemp's workshirts, with a leather apron reaching to his knees, he started work in the forge.

He was pleased to find that he had not lost his old skill with horses. His five years in America had been spent mainly with petrol-engine contraptions. Tansy always had a knack with machinery of any sort. Long before he left on his travels, the forge had become the repair-shop for the district's bicycles.

NOTHING at all seemed to have changed at the forge; and, as mid-morning approached, Tansy was pleased to find, too, that the old customs still continued—that Jane still brought a large brown teapot down to the forge.

Bending at the knees, he opened his mouth comically. "Don't bother with the mugs—pour it straight down," he said. It had been a favourite joke in the old days, but now, apparently, Jane no longer found it amusing.

With an icy glance, she walked swiftly by him, thumped the teapot down on a bench, and left with equal swiftness. Staring after her trim figure, Tansy rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

That afternoon he got his first look at Dr. Danvers—Jane's suitor. The doctor was a tall, pale young man with a large moustache and well-oiled hair. Tansy took an instant dislike to him.

When Danvers went up to the house, he left his motor-car in front of the forge. It was a large, yellow-painted machine, two seats and big brass headlamps. Tansy gave it an expert's scrutiny.

The automobiles he had helped to make in America had been equipped with refinements such as windscreen wipers and petrol gauges. This British model had neither, but there was a dipstick on the petrol tank. The tank, Tansy noted, was full.

ILLUSTRATED BY RICHARD O. ROSE

Dr. Danvers stayed in the house about half an hour. Then Jane came out with him and they walked together to the car.

"Topping fun," Danvers said. "You really must let me take you for a spin, Miss Kemp."

Jane laughed. Tansy did not catch her words. "Oh, come, Miss Kemp," the doctor protested. He stroked his moustache roguishly. "Confess now—is it me you would be nervous of, or is it my motor-car?"

Jane shot a glance to where Tansy was eavesdropping shamelessly. She raised the pitch of her voice. "Which would I find the more dangerous?" she asked teasingly.

Danvers chuckled in appreciation. He bent his head towards her and murmured something inaudible. A suspicion of a blush coloured Jane's cheeks. She gave Tansy another glance and said loudly: "Then I must put it to the test, mustn't I?" She smiled warmly. "Would tomorrow at five be too late, Doctor Danvers?"

"Oh, no, no!" Danvers said. "That would be a ripping time for a spin. But please . . . won't you call me Keith?"

"All right, then," Jane said shyly. She held out her hand and Danvers bent over it. "Tomorrow at five . . . Keith."

She stood waving until the doctor had vanished up the street in a cloud of dust and smoke. Then, without seeming to notice Tansy, she went back into the house. Tansy went back into the forge, where he picked up a hammer and vented his feelings on the anvil. . . .

The next morning Tansy's luggage arrived. It had been sent down to Dimbury from Liverpool, and the carrier brought it to the village—two trunks and three expensive-looking cases. Tansy eyed it moodily. He rummaged in one of the carelessly packed cases and found a small red

box. He put this into his pocket, sighed, and went off to the forge.

When Jane brought the tea down a few hours later, Tansy was bent over his work. He did not look up. She hesitated, then filled a mug and took it to Mr. Kemp. After a long moment she filled another mug and brought it in to Tansy.

Tansy seemed surprised to see her. "Why, hallo, Miss Kemp," he said. "I thought you'd be getting ready."

"Getting ready for what?" Jane asked him curiously.

"Why, for a topping spin in the ripping old motor, of course," Tansy said.

"Oh . . . oh, go back to America—I hate you," Jane said in a low, intense voice. She ran out of the forge.

Dr. Danvers arrived promptly at five. He gave a jubilant double honk on the car hooter and walked up to the house. Tansy growled to himself and tried an experimental swing with his hammer.

"Here, steady!" exclaimed Mr. Kemp, dodging back. He stared at the yellow motor-car doubtfully. "She's going out in that thing. Is it safe, do you think?"

"That!" Tansy laughed scornfully. "If he can get more than thirty miles an hour out of that, I'm a monkey's uncle. Here, look at the carburettor. Why, of all the antiquated ideas. . . ."

He led Mr. Kemp over to the car and began listing its defects. "Yes, but is it safe?" Mr. Kemp insisted.

"What?" Tansy was bent over the engine. "Oh, yes, it's *safe* enough, if that's all you want. But just look at the design. Have you ever seen a magneto beside the sump breather before?"

"No," said Mr. Kemp. He had no idea what Tansy was talking about. "All I know is I never have liked 'em and I never shall, and that's a fact. . . . Now what's the matter?"

"Oh, nothing," Tansy said. He was wearing a puzzled frown on his face. "His tank is nearly empty, that's all. It was full up yesterday."

He replaced the petrol dipstick and walked away as Jane and the doctor came out. Leaning against the wall of the forge, he watched Danvers help Jane into the passenger seat. She sat stiffly, without so much as glancing towards the forge.

Young Dr. Danvers started the engine and, after a few words with Mr. Kemp, climbed up beside her. They roared away down the street. Jane turned once to wave to her father. Tansy stared after her and his fingers clutched hard on the small box in his pocket.

"They're going through Epping Forest," Mr. Kemp said as he returned to the forge.

"Epping Forest?" Tansy said. "Yes, he's got about enough petrol to get there. . . . My God—I'll cut his liver out."

Mr. Kemp started back in alarm. "What's wrong, lad?"

"I'll kill him," Tansy yelled. He ran wildly into the street. "I've got to catch them. A horse, a bicycle! Anything!"

His eye fell on a rusting penny-farthing that stood derelict by the side of the smithy. Even then it was an antique. Tansy did not hesitate. Throwing off his leather apron, he hurled himself upon the machine and, within seconds, was swooping down the High Street.

"Come back," Mr. Kemp shouted. "Tansy boy, you'll kill yourself."

But Tansy, missing a cottage wall by inches, scattered a flock of chickens, careered madly round the corner of the village pump, and was gone.

Pedalling furiously, he reached the crest of Deep Devil's Hill, half a mile out of the village, in time to see the doctor's car nearing the bottom. Whatever may have been the defects of

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IN JOHN BULL NEXT WEEK

---

the penny-farthing, it could go downhill like a rocket. Sheer momentum kept Tansy upright on the downward plunge.

He was within fifty yards of the car as it passed over the hump bridge at the bottom. Jane looked back and saw him. She said something to Danvers, who also turned, grinning.

"Jane!" Tansy shouted desperately. "Jane! Listen to me."

It would have been more appropriate if he had shouted "Watch me," because at that moment he reached the hump bridge and immediately became airborne. He felt himself soaring higher and higher and was amazed to see, far below him, the penny-farthing rammed into a hedge.

Then he curved downwards and reached, after a graceful parabola, Farmer Witham's duckpond.

By the time Tansy had floundered miserably to the bank, dripping slime and mud, Danvers and Jane had vanished into the distance.

Even the *putter-put* of the motor-car engine was no longer audible. There was nothing but the cheep of crickets in the grass, the song of a blackbird and the squelch of his shoes.

Tansy salvaged the penny-farthing and was relieved to find that it still functioned. Grimly he remounted and set a course for Epping Forest, six miles away. There was no doubt in his mind about the doctor's intentions.

When Jane and Danvers reached the secluded shade of the forest the car would splutter to a stop. And Danvers would say smugly: "We seem to have run out of petrol. . . ."

In his way the doctor was a pioneer. . . .

But despite his careful planning, an hour later things were not going as Dr. Danvers had hoped. Jane's anticipated token resistance was proving unaccountably spirited. And he had a feeling that it was more than normal feminine coyness.

"Let me go. You beast—you beast!"

The doctor was hot and tired of the struggle, and only vanity was preventing him from taking her at her word when Tansy arrived.

One look at the ruffian's muddy and enraged face, as he leaped recklessly from the penny-farthing, was enough for Danvers. Leaving Jane, his motor-car and his vanity to look after themselves, the doctor raced away and disappeared into the forest.

He did not stop running for at least five minutes.

"Oh, Tansy!" Jane wailed. Cuddled close to his chest, she began to cry. Her voice was muffled. "Tansy, darling, I'm so sorry. He . . . he said we'd run out of petrol."

"I know," Tansy said consolingly. "But there's a full can under the driving seat. I'll drive you home in a minute."

Jane looked up wonderingly. "Can you drive, Tansy?"

"Had my own Oldsmobile in the States," Tansy boasted.

He brought the small box from his pocket and opened it. A massive diamond flashed yellow and purple fire in the dying sunlight. Jane gasped as Tansy tenderly slipped the ring over her finger.

"But—but I don't understand," she said. "It's wonderful, Tansy. Where . . . how did you get it?"

"Bought it," Tansy said simply. He grinned. "Did you think I was poor?"

"Yes," Jane said, bewildered. "I—I mean, aren't you?"

Tansy kissed her. "I'm sorry, Jane. I just wanted to see if you still loved me even if you believed I was poor. And then you never gave me a chance to tell you."

"Tell me what?"

"About the Regan-Verner Carburettor Company," Tansy said. "We're going to open up a factory in London. Shall we go home now?"

Jane smiled and reached up to him. "No, let's stay here for a while, Tansy. . . ."

That's really all there is to it. Jane and Tansy were married in August that year and lived happily till the end of their days. I am sure of that because I'm their son. Tansy died two years ago, and my mother joined him last month.

The only other thing is this: I've been gradually sorting through her belongings. It's something I wanted to do myself and, because RV Carburettors takes up most of my time, it has been a long job. But this morning I began emptying her dressing-table.

One of the drawers was already almost empty. There were only two tissue-wrapped bundles inside.

One was a small posy of very faded dog-daisies—the very ones, I suppose, that Tansy gave Jane on her fourteenth birthday. In the other bundle was an equally faded posy of bluebells.

And so I'm inclined to think that she didn't throw *all* of Tansy's smelly wild flowers back at him.

THE END

Playgrounds for the world

by PETER JACKSON

Other people's sport makes work for Cecil Jones. He will lay tennis courts on cliff faces and ice rinks in Africa

EARLY last December, Cecil Jones, a British sports architect, was called to the headquarters of the New York Giants baseball team. On the way by air he studied the rules of the game and read the life story of Joe DiMaggio. During his taxi ride from the airport he asked the driver to stop and draw diagrams on the dusty windscreen showing how a home run is made.

"Even then, I was rather baffled by the elaborate layout of the ground," says Jones. "Luckily, all the club officials wanted to talk about was the weather." They explained how baseball spectators have their money refunded if a game is rained-off before it is half over. A wet season could lose the promoters several hundred thousand dollars.

"I can't control your weather," said Jones, "but I can do the next best thing." He returned to England and in the next three months produced a top dressing for the playing area which will dry out within minutes of a heavy downpour, enabling games interrupted by rain to be completed. Now, wearing a borrowed pair of baseball boots, he often joins his research staff in sliding about on a sample of the new dressing.

Says Jones: "We know it can stand up to the wettest American summer, but we have got to make sure it will stand up to the Giants."

As consultant to the En-Tout-Cas Company, of Syston, Leicestershire, which claims to be the biggest sports contractors in the world, Jones deals with clients wanting everything from a putting green in Persia to an ice-skating rink in Central Africa.

A solidly built, methodical Midlander, he carries out experiments for surface materials to meet a world-wide variety of conditions. He has gained international tennis experience by playing only on the trial court outside his office. The playing area is laid with specimen surfaces, each designed for a different overseas market. "Your own shot can land in Hongkong," says Jones, "and the return may bounce in Nigeria."

Three years ago he jogged about in spiked running shoes helping to try out a new type of track mixture on which Roger Bannister was presently to run the world's first four-minute mile. He once dragged a speedway rider's steel-soled boot up and down a racing surface he was developing for Harringay.

Two recent inquiries were for a cricket pitch and a golf course. One was to be built on hilly, well-wooded land in Wales, and the other on a disused aerodrome in East Anglia.

"The site in Wales was a natural for golf and the other perfect for cricket," says Jones. "But there must be something in the attraction of opposites. At heavy expense, the Welsh customer wanted his land flattened for cricket, and the East Anglian asked us to break up the old aerodrome with golfing hazards."

Later Jones was given five weeks to build a ten-acre sports ground in Yorkshire before winter set in. It meant blasting through solid rock to level a fifty-foot drop on a steep hillside, but he made his men work overtime to do the job in a fortnight. "If we'd left it any later the grass seeds would not have germinated before spring," he says. "Instead of the green and grassy arena we handed over, it would have looked like a derelict open-cast site."

Until the Wembley Olympics in 1948, two years had usually been allowed for making a top-class running track. At Wembley, Jones had only two weeks to produce a running surface —and first he had to remove the stadium's greyhound track, mechanical hare, lamp standards, concrete posts and parts of the football pitch. He planned the contract as a complicated combined operation for a whole corps of labour gangs, then conducted intensive rehearsals complete with tippers, tractors and rollers. Moving in only minutes after the final dog meeting, he and his men worked night and day to produce a fully equipped athletics arena with time to spare before the opening of the Games.

Ronald Brown, now Jones's managing director, joined him in a last-minute trial sprint on the new track. Brown was away first, but after a few yards collapsed in agony, with a torn Achilles tendon. As Brown was taken to hospital, Jones finally abandoned all hope of an athletics career.

"As a middle-aged man of fourteen stone, I decided it would be safer trying to break records by building tracks—not by running on them."

JONES did break a personal record when preparing for last year's Olympic Games. He took only ten days to lay the Melbourne running surface, which was criticized as "disgracefully soft" by some British athletes but which suited United States and Russian runners so well that Jones was asked about providing tracks for the Pan-American Games and for Moscow Stadium.

At the end of the Games, some of the crowd swarmed on to the track, fell to their knees and tried to scrape up souvenir handfuls. Jones, with another customer for this surface material which had been shipped 12,000 miles from Britain, was relieved when it proved so firm that most spectators went home with only the dust collected under any unbroken fingernails. Not to be denied, Australian athlete Marjorie Jackson borrowed a pickaxe to get herself a chunk of the track.

"The mass invasion must have horrified Jones," says a colleague. "Looking after his tracks, he gets as fussy as a groundsman at Lord's."

Although more than two hundred records have been broken on London's White City track since he relaid it in 1949, Jones still worries about its treatment between sports meetings. He has seen his carefully laid running surface used for chariot racing, pony trotting, a horse and hounds display, a Royal procession by motor car and for gallops by the King's Troop, Royal Horse

Girl members of the En-Tout-Cas tennis club test an experimental court. Special surfaces are designed for different parts of the world

A new running track was laid in two weeks for the 1948 Olympics at Wembley. Until then a similar job usually took two years

Jones checks the mixing of running track material. He perfected a new blend on which Bannister ran the first four-minute mile

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Artillery, complete with iron-wheeled cannon. But when he complained: "I suppose you will have elephants next," a stadium executive asked: "Do you think they will catch on?"

On overseas contracts, Jones recruits his labour force locally. When he provided sports facilities for an hotel in Tangier, a request for contact with the city's employment exchange produced two portly Arabs—"complete with bubbly pipes and long-winded courtesy." Eventually they agreed to supply the necessary labour. This turned out to be thirty native women who reported for duty next day, equipped only with head baskets.

"They proved very good workers," says Jones. "It was some time before we discovered that they were the wives of the two Arabs, who appeared each week to collect their pay."

At his drawing board, Jones works to a library of regulations covering the playing of every established sport except shove-ha'penny—"and I could check up on that if necessary." His biggest task is to reconcile a textbook layout with the site chosen by a client.

TENNIS enthusiasts have asked Jones's firm to build courts in some strange settings—on a rocky islet in a remote Canadian lake, half-way down a cliff face in southern France, on the roof of a London store, and inside the ancestral dining hall of an Irish aristocrat who explained: "I feel I have got beyond table tennis."

A particularly difficult site was at a shooting lodge in the Scottish Highlands, inaccessible by road. When the skipper of a Clyde "puffer," sister ship to the star of the film *The Maggie*, was asked if he had room on board for a tennis court, he suggested that they should approach the Queen Mary. But he agreed to take the cargo when Jones assured him that it would be seventy tons of ashes, twenty tons of top dressing, bales of wire and posts.

When the ship neared the lodge the beach proved too shallow to go close in, except for a brief period at the height of the tide. After the job was completed, Jones told the owner: "You have a court which literally came in with the tide."

Born in Rugby fifty-seven years ago, Jones joined En-Tout-Cas to combine his interests in landscape work and sport. As an architect and surveyor, he helped to expand the company's interests during the 1930s.

When a Leicestershire brewer said that he enjoyed swimming off the Belgian coast during a holiday, Jones offered to design a swimming pool for his garden. "No," said the brewer. "Cut an airstrip through the flower beds so that I can fly to Belgium for a Sunday morning dip every week."

Jones obliged and, as light aircraft were then popular, went on to build private aerodromes all over the country. Ronald Brown always insisted on making the maiden landing, often before the runways had been grassed over. "From the air we seemed to be heading for a ploughed field," says Jones, who went as navigator in a little Gypsy Moth. "For long journeys in bad weather we kept low so that I could follow the railway lines. A bonfire signalled that the workmen were ready for us—and also showed which way the wind was blowing."

During the war, Jones worked on full-scale aerodromes. Afterwards he began to wonder if there was any social significance in one of the first postwar orders for a millionaire-class swimming pool. It came from a working men's club.

"But I soon found out that the old-style client was still with us," he says. When an industrialist developed a passion for skittles he got Jones to change the hall at his home into a fully equipped skittles alley.

The man's wife was away when work began and Jones was supervising the final touches when she returned to find the most elegant part of the house had become an alley.

"I expected an outcry," says Jones, "then found it had been her idea. She preferred the clink of skittles in the hall to waiting up for him to come home from the pub where he caught the craze."

THE END

Outlaw boy

Continued from page 8

he heard of Marlyn's death, he returned here to pester her again. She still would have none of him. She married me, and he's never forgiven her.

"He hates us both, and that, I'm convinced, is why he went out of his way to get the boy under his influence—to make a mockery of me, the dull, middle-aged, preoccupied *medico* of a stepfather. He'd take the boy secretly to the cockfighting pits, the slingshot contests——"

"Slingshot?" Henry said.

"The *alcade* here," Don Arrigo said, "has placed a ban, with good reason, on all firearms, sporting or otherwise. There's been a lot of trouble, with Rafael Robledo and his kind at the back of it. In defiance, these ruffians have made themselves masters of the stone-hurling sling. They hold contests among themselves.

"Rafael Robledo is outstanding among them—in that as in everything. The sport is a passion with him. I've myself seen him bring down hawks on the wing. Now it's his sling that's made him a fugitive. There was an affray at one of the Sunday cockfights, some weeks back. The *rurales*, the police, intervened. They were after Robledo, the ringleader. He unlimbered his sling. He cut the eye out of a *rurale*—killed him instantly."

Henry looked out at the arid, sun-glittering hills. The cricket fields of the school seemed a long, long way away.

"The boy was mixed up in that?" he said.

"No," Don Arrigo said. "For once I had Sebastian sulking under my eye. Robledo escaped. He got away up into the hills. No one knows them better than he. He knows where water's to be found—and other things. The posses hunted interminably. To kill a *rurale*—this is something, in these parts. But they found no trace of Robledo.

"And now—Señor Bow—now we come to it. Ten days after Robledo's escape, Sebastian vanished too—in the night. Oh, we had no doubt—Doña

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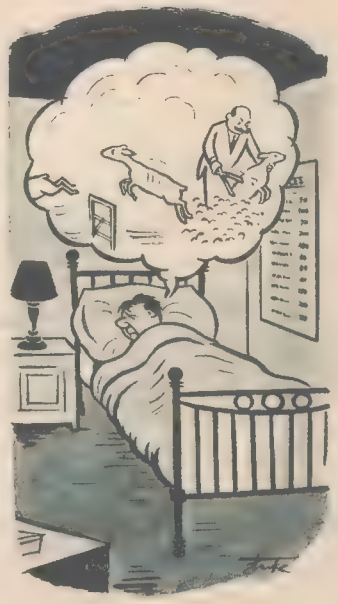

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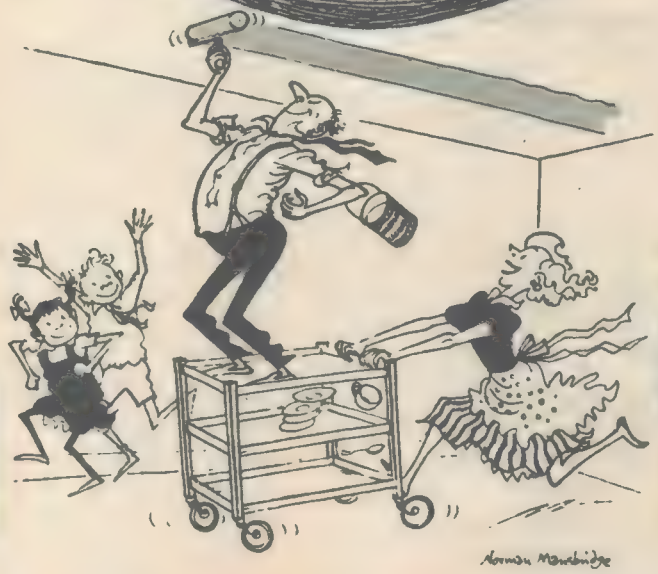

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Sofia and me—where he had gone. Often he'd go truant for days together, to roam with Robledo in the hills. He knew Robledo's secret places. He'd gone, of course, to seek his hero—now an outlaw and, to a twelve-year-old boy, a hundred times more a hero for that. You know boys, Señor Bow."

Henry nodded. "But how d'you know he found him?" he said. "If the boy's not returned, he could have met, perhaps, with some accident. . . ."

"No," said Don Arrigo. "Nor have we reported his absence. We've given it out that he's ill in bed here. Our servants are loyal.

"Now, Señor Bow, a fugitive in this area has problems. There is desert to cross—formidable for a man afoot, without resources. The *rurales* still keep watch on the corrals at night—and on fishing boats on the coast, at no great distance. Checkpoints are still maintained to examine the very small traffic using the one road out. All the same, the *rurales* are more than half convinced that Robledo has got out of the area somehow—or died in the desert. But Doña Sofia and I know different."

"How?" Henry said.

"A few mornings ago," Don Arrigo said, "a shutter was found forced, in the house here. It was a small window, just big enough for a boy to squeeze through. I found nothing missing, but one of my servants, after a considerable struggle with his conscience, came to me and admitted that he knew where Sebastian kept a hoard he had made of thongs and supple pouches for slings. They were gone, Señor Bow. You see what it means?"

"Robledo and the boy are not far away," Henry said.

"Exactly," said Don Arrigo. "They're up in the hills there somewhere. Thefts of food would alert the *rurales* again. It was thought that those thongs and pouches would not be missed. There's game of a sort in the hills. A stone from a slingshot, as Robledo can use it, would break the leg of a mountain goat, for instance. But you need plenty of thongs and pouches—if you're hunting your meat with a slingshot. And the right kind of missile—eh, *querida*?" He glanced at his wife. "Tell Señor Bow of the memory which Sebastian's breaking into his own home stirred for you."

"I've known Robledo since we were children together," said Doña Sofia. "Even then he was always in the hills with his slingshot. Once I was with him, and he showed me the place where he got the perfect stones for his purpose—black pebbles, as round and heavy as if they had been shaped in a bullet-mould. He told me they were found only in that place, and that he alone knew of it. He told me because he regarded me as his—his *novia*, and he swore me to secrecy."

Don Arrigo took a map from his pocket. "My wife has marked the place here," he said. "We think that Robledo, hunting for food, needs stones from that place more than ever before in his life. If we sent the *rurales* to set a trap there, they might well get Robledo—sooner or later. But, Señor Bow, we dare not do it. Robledo killed one of their own, and the *rurales* would shoot on sight. The boy might be killed, too—Sebastian."

Henry nodded, frowning, rolling a cigarette.

"But I have a plan," Don Arrigo said. "I've thought of going myself to the place of stones, concealing myself there and keeping watch. If and when they came, Robledo and the boy, I should trail them to their hideout. They must have one up there, somewhere. I'd keep it under observation till they went out again to their hunting, and then . . . one moment."

He rose, opened a door. Henry glimpsed the white cabinets of a surgery; and, returning, Don Arrigo laid a corked phial on the table.

"A doctor's weapon," he said, "the only one I should take. No shooting—nothing that could endanger the boy. They must have water there, a wine-skin, some kind of vessel, something that could be doped with the contents of this phial. When they returned and drank—they would sleep for twenty-four hours or so. I should carry the boy away."

Henry looked at the dark, strong face of the Mexican doctor. "And Robledo?" he said.

"I'd send the *rurales* to bring him in," Don Arrigo said harshly, "and string him up with his heels kicking."

Sofia laid a hand on his. "You can't go, Arrigo—you know it. This might involve days of watching, of vigil. With patients you dare not leave, here in the town, how *can* you go?"

"Yet supposing I suggested this plan to the *rurales*," Don Arrigo said, "can you see them using the patience it calls for? They'd shoot on sight, regardless of the boy. No, there's no one I could trust to carry out this plan, except my——"

He broke off. His expression changed. He looked at Henry Bow.

Henry saw what the doctor was thinking. Henry was already thinking the same thought.

Seldom had any thought depressed him so deeply. There were excellent arguments against it. He was a man of books and form rooms. Action for him was a matter of winter afternoons spent instructing small boys in the theoretical advantages of tackling low, and of summer evenings at the nets

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pointing out the advisability of using a modicum of brains when one bowled. Furthermore, he was a stranger here, whereas this outlaw Robledo was at large in hills he knew intimately.

All excellent arguments; unanswerable; he had only to utter them. But Doña Sofia raised her head slowly. She, too, looked at him. There was a dark shine of hope in her eyes.

Henry Bow repressed a sigh. He cleared his throat in a dry, schoolmasterly manner. "I was sent to fetch the new boy," he said. He picked up the phial from the table. . . .

For his first two days in the hills, the thought of the *rurale* who had had his eye cut out by a stone from a sling-shot lurked in Henry's mind with an unpleasantly circumstantial vividness. By the blazing afternoon of the third day, however, he had pretty well given up all idea of encountering Robledo and the boy.

Heat currents quivered visibly over the lonely, broken country of buttes and *arroyos*. From a cranny among

TROUBLE—I

To bear other people's afflictions everyone has courage and enough to spare.

Benjamin Franklin

rocks he was gazing through his sunglasses down the slope of a boulder-strewn, bone-dry watercourse. He had seen one or two lizards, red-and-black, hideous, and had given them a wide berth. He had been plagued by large ants, also red-and-black. Once only the dry whirr of a rattlesnake had sent his heart into his mouth. Otherwise, this wilderness seemed empty of life.

He eased the peak of his cap, ran a finger round under the handkerchief knotted about his throat. He uncorked the skin water-bag loaned to him by Don Arrigo. He took a sparing swig of the lukewarm water. As he passed the back of his hand over his mouth, he felt the prick of beard stubble.

This is a fool's errand, he told himself testily.

He was growing more and more certain of it. He had made his camp a mile or so distant. The hours from dawn to dark he spent here, close to the place of the black pebbles, reasoning that Robledo would hardly come after dark to seek stones. This was the place Doña Sofia had marked on the map. The black pebbles—eroded obsidian, he judged—were in pockets here and there in the dust of the stream bed. But what real chance was there, he wondered, that Robledo and the boy were any longer in these hills?

Silently over the rocks nearby sailed a black dot of shadow. Looking up, he saw a hawk hovering in blue infinities. *What do you see?* he thought. *A man and a boy—outlaws—prowling somewhere? Or just me—Tom Fool?*

Sitting in his cranny, the rock at his back burning hot through his shirt, he rolled a cigarette with sweating fingers. It was a measure of his discouragement, for, fearing a wisp of smoke might betray him just as his quarry approached, this was the first daylight cigarette he had risked. . . .

And he didn't light it. The matchbox was in his hand when a startling rattle of loose stones made him snatch the cigarette from his lips and sprawl full length, face down. He felt the heavy thud of his heart against the hot dust as he peered out from his crack among the boulders.

Thirty yards away, down the opposite bank of the watercourse, tumbled a small cascade of dust and stones, followed instantly by a brown streak that hurtled from behind a spiny *sahuaro* cactus and landed with neat, bunched hooves on the dry stream bed.

He glimpsed the curled, massy horns and pale eyes of a wild goat. It wheeled away, bounding fleet-footed down the watercourse—and a leather thong cracked in the air like a whip-lash. A stone hummed, venomous as a hornet, struck a rock and ricocheted in a whining arc.

A figure appeared, dwarfed by the lifted arms of the *sahuaro,* on the crest of the opposite bank, silhouetted against the bleached sky. It was a boy, neckerchiefed but shirtless, in blue jeans tucked into calf-high moccasins, with a pouch dangling from a silver-studded leather belt. His brown chest heaved; sweat made rivulets down his dusty ribs. His hair was a bleached blond mop. Thumbing a stone into the sling-pouch in his left hand, he jerked the thongs taut, slanting across his body.

"Aqui!" he shouted. *"Por aqui*—near here, Rafael!" He plunged forward, sliding down the bank in a cloud of dust.

His shout had been directed across the stream bed, in Henry's direction. Simultaneously, Henry heard the clatter of a loose stone behind him. There was a sudden thud of booted feet and a shadow fell across him.

Gigantic against the sky, a man stood poised on a boulder, staring down at him in stupefaction.

Henry moved swiftly, twisting round, heaving to his knees. But Robledo was swifter. He launched himself, diving, his hands clutching. His fingers crushed in on Henry's throat. Hurled back, Henry's head met the rock behind him with an impact that burst in his skull with a blinding white flash like a bomb. . . .

Now he was just one solid ache above the shoulders. His head weighed a ton. He tried to raise a hand to it, but couldn't; his wrists were lashed together under him. The discovery galvanized his memory, and he opened his eyes in a hurry.

Above him was a roof of groined, pale rock, quivered over by sun shimmer and tree shadow. He stared up at the moving patterns in wonder, and a face came and looked down at him. It was a boy's brown face, clean-cut like Doña Sofia's, and, though he

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got his blond hair presumably from his English father, his dark eyes were from his mother.

For a moment the boy and the schoolmaster gazed at each other wordlessly, then Henry forced a smile with his stiff, cracked lips. "Hallo, Sebastian," he said.

"Rafael!" the boy yelled.

Henry rolled his throbbing head sideways. He was lying against the rear wall of a shallow cave with a floor of dust as fine and white as flour. The low cave mouth was almost blocked by a spiny brown tree-growth. A hand pulled the branches aside and Henry glimpsed the white lightning of the sun on tumbled rocks.

A man ducked into the cave. He wore trousers and a tattered shirt. He too had a pouch of pebbles at his belt. He held the binoculars which Don Arrigo had loaned to Henry. His hair gleamed sleek as black enamel. His handsome, aquiline face was olive-skinned, silkily bearded. He looked

The Return

by L. A. G. STRONG

The village church, so small it has hardly shrunk
Since I, a child, unlatched the heavy door
And tiptoed in; the pulpit, like the trunk
Of a squat thick tree; the screen that Cromwell tore
And hacked, and grieving pious hands renewed;
And, measuring the silence, the old clock.
Fifty years shrivel to an interlude:
No change; porch, pulpit, screen, and strong tick-tock
Whittling my visit from the calendar,
With stern, sharp stroke cancelling every breath;
And I am still that small parishioner
Who recognized the beat of life and death,
Pondered and nodded, looked up unafraid—
Then, flooded with foreknowledge, knelt and prayed.

down at Henry with dark, hard eyes, then sat on a ledge of rock and began to roll a cigarette with tobacco from Henry's own pouch.

"Schoolmaster, eh?" he said. "Are you hungry, schoolmaster?"

"How did you know I was a schoolmaster?" Henry said.

"You had your passport in your pocket," said Robledo. "The boy there knows a bit of English." He licked the cigarette-paper. "An English schoolmaster," he said. "*Y pues*, you hungry, schoolmaster? You should be. You've been lying there, still as the dead, since this time yesterday."

"Twenty-four hours?" Henry said. He tried to clear his parched throat. "I'd be grateful for some water."

"Untie his hands, *amigo*," Robledo said to the boy. "Let him eat and drink." He lighted his cigarette. "You came for the boy, didn't you, schoolmaster? To take him to his father's brother, in England. And they sent you into the hills, looking for us. Sofia and Arrigo Casal sent you. Sofia told you about the sling-stones—the black pebbles. *Digo*, I never thought she'd remember that—after all these years. Women, Señor Bow!"

The boy had freed Henry's hand. His ankles remained bound. He heaved himself to a sitting position, his back to the cave wall. The boy handed him his own water-bag, now refilled, and a hunk of charred meat.

"See how you like it," said Robledo. "That's what I've been living on for weeks." He smoked, watching Henry drink thirstily.

"Better now?" said Robledo. "Then maybe you'll explain this. It was in your pocket. Where did you get it from?"

He was holding out his hand. On his palm lay the corked glass phial.

"Well?" he said. "From the doctor eh? From Don Arrigo. What was the idea? To watch for me at the place of stones and, if I came, step out and try to parley with me, get me to hand over the boy? And casually offer me a drink from your water-bag, with this stuff slipped into it—some damned drug to put me to sleep, so that you could take the boy and send back the *rurales* for me?

"That was it, eh? I see it in your face. Arrigo Casal put you up to this. A dirty doctor's weapon. I'd like to ram this down his throat."

"All he wants," Henry said, "all any of us want, is to get the boy safe. Why let him share your fate, Robledo? You'll be caught, sooner or later."

"Not alive, schoolmaster."

"You'll let the boy go the same way as you?" Henry said. "Just because you're his hero, because he's loyal to you? You killed a man, Robledo. Now you're fighting for your own life. But it's *your* fight, not the boy's. Why sacrifice him? Let me take him, Robledo, and I give you my word the *rurales* shall hear nothing of this."

"That's good enough for me," Robledo said, and he smiled, puffing at the cigarette, and looked at the boy. "You hear, *niño*? Go with the schoolmaster. Untie his ankles, Sebastiano. Go with him. What are you waiting for? I'm not stopping you. Go on," he shouted, with sudden vehemence, "get out."

The boy stood sullenly, with clenched hands.

"What's this?" said Robledo, and his teeth flashed white in his handsome, reckless face as he smiled. "Can it be you'd rather break for the coast tonight with me? The *rurales* should have begun to get careless by now. Granero'll take us in his boat, if we can reach him unseen. But it's a gamble, boy—neck or nothing. Safer to go, now, with the schoolmaster."

The boy, meeting Henry's eyes, spat on the dust and ground it with his feet.

Robledo laughed. "All right," he said, "get out there and keep your eyes open. *Anda, hombre.*"

He gave the boy a shove towards the cave mouth, and the boy went out. Robledo, smiling, began to roll another cigarette.

"A cheap triumph," Henry said dryly. "I've usually found there's some good somewhere in a man that a boy could take for a hero, but you. . . . The boy's loyalty, his companionship, his sharing your danger . . . it doesn't mean a thing to you. You're holding him for no other reason than to torture a woman who wouldn't have you, who saw through you. Doña Sofia——"

Robledo's foot shot out, thudded against Henry's shoulder, toppled him on his side. A hard knee ground into Henry's back as Robledo jerked thongs about his wrists and knotted them tight. He heaved Henry to a sitting posture, ramming him against the cave wall, squatting on his heels before him.

"You talk too much, schoolmaster," Robledo said softly. "You know it?" His hot eyes stared into Henry's. "I've a cure for that." He reached for the water-bag, uncorked it. He bit the cork from Don Arrigo's glass phial, tipped the contents into the bag. He swirled the bag round, so that the water gurgled in it. "This'll stop your talk and cure your headache. A nice long sleep, schoolmaster. Hold your head up and I'll play nurse."

"Thanks," Henry said. "I've already had a drink."

"This is an extra one for your own good," Robledo said, swirling the bag gently. "Believe me, schoolmaster. It's near sundown. See how the light's changing? We'll be gone in an hour or two, the boy and me.

"Are we to let you go—to alert the *rurales*? No. Then shall we leave you here, bound? You'll die, Señor Bow. A pity. What, then? You brought

"So this is your famous Air Ministry roof"

your own salvation with you. You can take Arrigo Casal's sleeping draught. When you're asleep, I'll cut your bonds. And when you wake—why, you're free to go. We'll either be safe at sea by then, or we'll be dead. Come now—drink."

He thrust the lip of the bag against Henry's mouth.

"Drink," Robledo said softly, "or I'll hold your nose and *pour* it into you."

"Rafael!" came a shout from outside, sudden and urgent.

Robledo rammed the cork back into the bag, set it on the ledge of rock, and plunged out through the thorny boughs masking the cave mouth.

Henry listened intently. There was no sound but the surge of his own pulse in his ears. The sunlight filtering through the boughs had grown brassy.

A faint, far-off, droning sound became audible. Suddenly he heard the thud of running feet, the branches were whipped aside, Sebastian ducked in. Panting, he glanced round the cave. Don Arrigo's binoculars stood on the ledge of rock. The boy seized them. He saw the water-bag, hesitated, grabbed it, pulled the cork. He drank deeply, hastily, the water spilling down his chest. He rammed the cork back in, tossed the bag aside, and, with the binoculars, ran out.

HENRY sat rigid. So swift had been the incident, he had had no chance to give warning. The boy had taken the sleeping draught.

Henry listened again. The droning sound had faded. He could no longer hear it. He twisted and strained at the thongs that bound him, but the effort only rasped the skin from his wrists and made sweat stream from him.

The light was almost gone now. He heard footsteps approaching. Robledo ducked in, the branches tearing at him. He carried the boy in his arms. He laid him on the ground, snatched up the water-bag and swirled it, looking at Henry.

"I couldn't stop him," Henry said.

"There's enough left for your dose," Robledo said grimly. He went on swirling the bag, making it gurgle. "It was an aeroplane that excited him," he said, "that's all. It didn't come close. And now this!" He looked down at the boy. "Well, he's coming with me tonight, if I have to carry him."

An idea had been shaping in Henry's mind. It was a long shot, but he had to try it.

"Robledo," he said, "I'm wondering. 'A doctor's weapon,' you called that stuff. Don Arrigo Casal hates you, Robledo. He regards you as a mad dog, to be painlessly removed—like any other mad dog. I'm remembering the way he kept impressing on me, over and over, that the contents of that phial were for *you*—for you alone."

Henry felt a trickle of sweat down his spine. The thumping in his chest was stifling. He didn't look up at Robledo. He kept his eyes on the boy.

"I'm wondering, Robledo," he said. "Would Don Arrigo have tricked me, *used* me—to get you? Would he be capable of that?"

Robledo squatted suddenly on his heels, put a hand on the boy's chest. The cave was silent.

"He's sleeping," Robledo said, after a moment.

"Will he wake?" said Henry, and the sweat was crawling down him. "The stuff was meant for you—for you only. Did Don Arrigo mean you to wake, d'you think? That's what I'm asking myself. That's what I'm——"

Robledo's hand smashed across his mouth. "The boy's asleep," he said, and he struck again, backhanded. "The boy's sleeping, you hear me?"

They peered at each other, over the still figure of the boy, in the gloom of the cave. Henry tasted blood from his cut lip, and exultation rose in him, because he saw now that the boy had come to mean more to Robledo than the man realized; the boy's loyalty and companionship and sharing of danger had had an effect. The boy himself had come to mean something to Robledo.

"How do *we* know," Henry said, "what was in that phial? The doctor knows. Nobody else does. Carry the boy away and, for all we know, you'll find him dead in your arms. Get him to the doctor, Robledo. He'll know what to do."

"It was a sleeping draught," Robledo said hoarsely.

"How do we *know*?" Henry shouted.

Still squatting on his heels, Robledo stared down at the boy. He put out a hand slowly and from the boy's limp fingers unwound the thongs of a sling.

Henry Bow didn't breathe.

Robledo's hand closed suddenly hard on the thongs, then threw them from him. A knife-blade flashed in the gloom. Stooping, he slashed Henry's bonds at wrist and ankle.

"Take him, schoolmaster," he said, "and be damned." Without a glance at the boy, he thrust through the branches across the cave mouth and was gone. . . .

It was dark now. This made it hard walking for Henry at first, carrying the sleeping boy over his shoulder. But the stars began to appear. They were bright and seemed very close. Soon the sky was sown all over with them. A yellowish wash of light spread over the buttes and *arroyos* as the moon rose; and the mesquite clumps, the warped joshua trees, the strange shapes of the *sahuaro* and the organ cacti cast slanting shadows.

A sound reached Henry. He stopped to listen, and heard the snarling bark, rising to the thin, long-drawn howl of a coyote, very far off. He waited, listening, looking at the weird landscape about him, until the sound died away into silence.

He thought of the school. He was troubled. But then he thought that, given time, any boy could be made to fit in there, even the toughest—even a boy who thought of himself as an outlaw.

After all, what boy didn't?

The schoolmaster smiled wryly to himself and, shifting the sleeping boy to a more comfortable position across his shoulder, walked on steadily, with his long, thin shadow moving before him.

THE END

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Holidays

. . . of course!

The girl in the white dress

Continued from page 15

said that it had been postponed for a week.

There was a chorus of groans.

Fennie took Allan aside. He said: "The trouble is that it's now on the same day as the play."

"We shall finish in time, shan't we?"

"Should do. There won't be much time though. . . ."

Exercise Canback had many of the qualities of a dream, with the infuriated howl of the jet engines, lined cheeks from wearing his oxygen mask, and a god's-eye view of the earth.

And finally, like some intoxicated fantasy, there was the search, over six miles up in the crystal atmosphere, for an elusive, glancing dart of light that might one day mean life or death for a nation. . . .

When he landed for the last time that day, Allan stood in silence, looking at the ground. He was stiff and tired, and his head ached.

Fennie came up and walked beside him. "You got an interception, didn't you?"

"I think so, sir."

Fennie looked at his watch. "We'll have to rush. Just time for a bath, and something to eat."

"I feel more like going to sleep."

"See you at the hall. . . ."

When Allan had put on his make-up, there were still a few minutes to go. He looked covertly out through the curtains at the audience.

A haze of smoke hung low in the hall, and there was a loud murmur of conversation. Officers lounged in the front rows, and the Group Captain sat in the middle.

The thought of going out in front made him feel like being sick. He turned away.

Christine said: "Good luck."

"I feel awful."

"You'll be all right."

"I can't remember any of my lines."

"Nor can I. It's always the same. It'll be different later. You'll see."

Allan doubted it. He could clearly visualize the picture as the curtain

TROUBLE—2

Borrow trouble for yourself, if that's your nature, but don't lend it to your neighbours.

Rudyard Kipling

rose on the second scene, revealing him speechless. The Group Captain would go berserk.

All through the first scene he stood petrified in the wings. Those people talking and gesticulating out there on the stage had no connection with him. He wasn't one of them. He stood, quietly shaking, suppressing an ignoble desire to run and hide.

The curtain fell, there was a flurry of bodies, and Allan felt himself being pushed into the middle of the stage. Then, with a little creak, the curtain rose.

Christine said: "You haven't congratulated me. . . ."

For the next hour, Allan was someone else. It was with a vague sense of surprise that he finally found himself standing in line with the rest of the cast, bowing, while the audience applauded generously.

He was holding Christine's hand, and it abruptly dawned on him that this was the first time that he had ever touched her. He squeezed her fingers gently. She turned her head and smiled at him, and, deliciously, he was aware that she was clutching his hand tightly.

Then it was all over. He could hear the audience scraping their chairs, going away. The Group Captain came back and gruffly thanked everybody. Little chattering, relieved groups formed, and for a moment he and Christine were left alone.

He realized then that no more could their meetings be counted on, taken for granted, and a sense of impending loss began to creep over him.

He said, without much hope: "When is the next play?"

"Not until next winter."

"Oh."

There was something of a silence.

"These last few weeks have been wonderful," Allan said.

"Yes. The play has been fun."

"I didn't mean that."

Her eyes were bright, and her cheeks flushed. She said, not looking at him: "I know."

"Christine," Allan said desperately, "I must see you again, talk to you. Often, if you will."

"I should like that," she said quietly.

Fennie came by, and said: "Come on you two. Sandwiches on the table. Oh, by the way," he said in Allan's ear, "the Group Captain wants to see you in his office tomorrow morning. Ten o'clock. . . ."

There were two things that could make Allan's stomach turn over. One was pulling out of a dive at five hundred knots. The other was the thought of Group Captain Taplow.

Next morning he was in the adjutant's office five minutes early, stiff in his best service dress, a new cap uncomfortable on his head. The adjutant said nothing, and let him sweat it out.

At ten o'clock he was saluting the Group Captain.

"I had hoped to have the chance of a long talk with you this morning," Taplow said. "Unfortunately something has come up, and I have to attend a conference in five minutes."

Allan made regretful noises.

"So I'll just say briefly that, despite your bad start, you seem to have settled down quite well. Your squadron commander seems satisfied. Did you know that you made a successful interception yesterday?"

"A Canberra, sir—but it wasn't confirmed,"

"It is now. Good show, that."

"Thank you, sir."

"I like an officer to take part in station activities. Didn't know you were an actor, though."

"Nor did I, sir."

"H'm. Who introduced you to the dramatic society?"

"Squadron Leader Fennie, sir."

"Did he now?" said Taplow thoughtfully. "Might have guessed it. Fennie is a born intriguer—er—diplomat, I mean." Taplow stood up to pick up his cap. "That's all, Hartington."

Allan didn't salute. He took a deep breath and said: "I'm sorry, sir. There's something else."

"I timed this interview," Taplow said dangerously, "for ten o'clock. It is now concluded. Good morning."

"It's about Christine, sir," Allan stuttered obstinately. "That is, your daughter, Miss Taplow. . . ."

The Group Captain swelled visibly. "Great screaming heavens, Hartington!" he exclaimed. "Do you expect the air force to come to a stop while I discuss my family with a pilot officer?"

"Then I must ask for another appointment, sir," Allan said.

The Group Captain said: "Oh, damn you. Come over to my house tonight for cocktails. Eight o'clock. You owe me a new mess jacket by the way." And he stalked out.

The adjutant came in and picked some papers up off the desk. He said: "Another rocket?"

"Not this time. First impressions seem to have worn off."

"The C.O. said of you," the adjutant commented dryly, "that he thought you were a cocky young blighter who was going to be the bane of his life."

"Oh," said Allan.

"He went on to say that you were the type that would either go a long way in the air force, or get kicked out. I should think that the odds are about even."

"I'll please the old buzzard if it kills me," Allan said.

He walked out of the office and along the corridor. *Christine*, he thought. And then he started to try to think kind things about her father. THE END

MY BROTHER Terry

ONE day Terry, who had the reputation of being the school clown, came home and excitedly told me that the boys in his class had dared him to climb to the top of the cathedral spire. At the time, we lived in Rangoon, and the spire of the cathedral was three hundred feet high. Terry climbed the tower and wrote his name in chalk on the top.

At lunchtime next day he was very subdued and whispered to me that he might be expelled. His form-master, nicknamed Porky, had heard of the dare and had threatened to climb the tower himself to see whose name was written at the top. When Terry went back to school in the afternoon, Porky fixed him with a beady eye and after a long pause shouted: "Write out two thousand times, 'I must dot the i's when I write my name.'"

Our father was a captain in the Indian Army and we spent many years in the East. We loved Burma and found it quite difficult to settle down when we came to England. Terry was sixteen at the time and went to school in London for a few months, but he was not happy there. He persuaded our parents to let him leave and start work.

He was quickly bored with the monotony of his first job, in an engineering works. He spent the day feeding a machine with long strips of metal and, when one day he was more bored than usual, he decided to amuse himself by doing a dance round the machines. During this, the front of his hair got caught and was pulled out by the roots. He came home disgusted with industry and wearing an oversized check cap.

Terry loves musical instruments and can play several. One of his early ambitions was to play in a dance band, and he was delighted when he was engaged to play the double-bass in a small dance hall. He could not afford a case for his instrument so he wrapped it in a large black blanket and carried it over his shoulder. The dance hall was opposite a cemetery, and Terry soon became exasperated by the neighbours' jokes about his bundle. He pinned a card on the blanket, reading: "I am not going to bury this—I play it."

He spent more and more of his time entertaining professionally and soon made a name for himself in the music halls. He had himself billed under bizarre titles such as "The Only Fully Clothed Nude in the World," "Late of the Human Race" and "The Performing Man." He has been performing crazily ever since.

WHO IS THIS FAMOUS BROTHER? See page 38

Far, far the mountain peak

Continued from page 21

did not love your mother, Peter. Your father left because he found that he could not accept the ties of marriage. His actual body could not be tied—he had to explore, to go to the lonely places of the earth, alone. Your mother thought love would find a way. It didn't, though the love was deep on both sides. He disappeared one night in Peshawar. He had to go."

They talked for a while. When the old man's voice began to fade, Peter stood up. Why had his grandfather talked about his missing, disappeared father? Did he imply that Emily also felt she had to go? Peter didn't think so. It was himself who had been "going" in that sense—on and up and out, impatient of ties, except those with people whom he needed or who would go as fast and as far as he.

Then—was the old man asking: "Do you have to go on the way you have been going?" Was he pointing out that he had reached the point his father reached that night in Peshawar—that here he must make up his mind whether his superiority to ordinary men or his kinship with them mattered more to him?

The old man said: "I think you'd better go and find her, Peter."

Peter said goodbye and let himself out into the street. . . .

His ribbon and rosette secured him a room at the crowded Green Mansion Hotel. He bathed, changed into a clean tunic and rang for the waiter to bring up a bottle of whisky.

What next? Was he to go round London, asking: "Has anyone seen my wife?" Should he go to the police at once? The whisky swirled in his glass. *Peggy*, he thought. Lady Margaret Walsh.

She answered his telephone call herself. "Who's there, please?"

"Peter Savage," he said.

There was a short pause. Then: "Peter? How nice to know you're back safe." He gritted his teeth. Then she said what he had been hoping for. "How's Emily?"

He sighed with relief. Peggy had watched Emily like a hawk all the time she was staying in Rudwal. She hated Emily, and himself perhaps a little bit more. He was certain that she would have known about it the moment anything untoward happened to either of them, or to their marriage.

He said: "Emily isn't here. Do you know where she is?"

"Not there? What do you mean? Oh, what's the matter, Peter? Don't say something's happened to her, too."

He fumbled for a cigar and began to light it. Her voice sounded tinny, brittle, and over-solicitous. He said: "I'm desperate. Please come round." He wasn't desperate yet, but he knew that was the surest way to bring her, offering her the prospect of gloating over his wretchedness. "I'm at the Green Mansion," he said. "How long will you be?"

"Not more than ten minutes. I'm only just round the corner."

"I'll be waiting," he said and hung the receiver carefully on the hook.

Peggy knew. He did not believe Emily had told her. She had taken pains to find out. The question was, would she tell him, or would she hug her secret through two or three more meetings?

After half an hour Peggy came. She came under a wide hat with a sweeping

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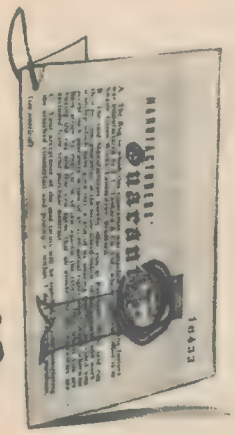

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ostrich feather curled round the brim, her eyes searching, eager for this first triumph of seeing him waiting for her, and Emily gone.

He led her into the lounge where ancient waiters shuffled about with drinks on trays, and Kitchener pointed from the wall: "Your King and Country need YOU."

"Another D.S.O.," she said. "How wonderful for you! And we're all so proud of you. You don't look very well, though."

"Whisky?" he asked abruptly. She nodded. In the old days a lady would never have drunk whisky in public, and seldom in private, but this was 1915.

"I saw Uncle George this evening," she said. She meant his father-in-law.

He said: "Then you knew Emily had gone. Why did you pretend to be surprised she wasn't with me?"

She took up her whisky and drank deeply. "I knew she'd left the house," she said, "I thought she might have quarrelled with Uncle George—wanted to be alone. I didn't know what had happened."

"For God's sake, Peggy, tell me where she is."

"Harry's in hospital in Brighton," she said suddenly. "A flesh wound, in the leg—shrapnel. Nothing serious, he says. Only he didn't get a medal. He hasn't got any medals yet, though he's been wounded twice and has been out since before Neuve Chapelle."

"Where has Emily gone?" he cut in.

Peggy said: "Emily? Poor Emily. She missed you so much—before you came back in June, I mean. Gerry tried to comfort her while he was in London, but then you came back and took him away. Emily was so afraid for both of you—really for Gerry more than you, I think sometimes, because she knew you'd come out all right. I knew that. Everyone knew that. Even Gerry knew, at the end, didn't he?"

She drank again, and he signalled to the waiter to refill her glass. He said: "Where's Emily?"

"Lonely," Peggy said. "I'm sure she's lonely, whatever she said. Did she tell you she didn't want to see you ever again?"

"Where is she?"

"And that it was no use your trying to find her? It isn't either, even if you use the police, because those Welsh people are so devoted, and they wouldn't give her away to the police or anyone else."

He said: "Peggy, if you don't tell me where Emily is, I am going to walk out of this hotel, now, and report to the War Office. By tomorrow night I'll be out of the country. You won't ever see me again. There'll be no more gloating, because I won't make any other attempt to find Emily. It will all be over. You don't want that."

She stood up suddenly: "Did Gerry die quickly?"

He stood up with her, facing her across the table. "Instantly," he said. "Goodbye, Peggy."

She said: "Wait. She's at Gaerwan Cottage. It's in Merionethshire, at the head of Cwm Bychan"—she pulled on her gloves—"but I'm sure you'd do better to go to the War Office. . . ."

The journey from London was long and slow but, once he got out of the train and could stretch his legs, some of his morbid anticipation fell away. He climbed steadily up the footpath. After three hours he came to the valley floor of Cwm Bychan, passed the old farmhouse and swung down the road.

Now it was close. The road ran between a low rise of rock and a black lake. His map showed that the cottage lay behind the rise, and a short lane led to it a hundred yards farther on. A mist from the sea swirled in irregular patches about the valley and over the lake, and suddenly he came upon her, walking towards him, a basket over her arm.

She stopped and stepped back. He went forward slowly, his hands out. He said: "Emily."

"Why do you have to be so dramatic?" she said. "Striding out of the mountains with mist all over your clothes!"

"I thought you would be told if I came from Llanbedr," he said. "I came from Trawsfynydd."

"That's a long way. Who told you I was here? Daddy? Your grandfather? No, he wouldn't."

"Peggy."

She said: "Yes. She would. You are as clever as you used to be. Now go back the way you came."

"I'm not going back until I know what's happened," he said.

"What has happened?" she said slowly. "Nothing's *happened*. I just found out that you're a murderer, a real cold murderer. I've always known that you would lead men to their deaths for something you thought worth while. I didn't like it, but it was part of you. I was fool enough to think I could hold it in check, that we'd perhaps find some way of life together that would replace it, or turn it to good use. I was wrong. And now go, go, for God's sake go."

Peter shook his head. "Take me back," he begged her humbly.

She hesitated a fraction of a second before answering. "No."

He stood looking into the lake. His eyes were dim with tears for the first time he could remember. His wife stood before him, and he loved her. But the avalanche had at last come to rest, and there he lay, revealed for what he was. Whatever he loved, he must conquer. Whoever followed him, he destroyed. The ruins stretched as far as his eye could see.

"What are you going to do?" Emily asked, almost conversationally.

He thought as matter-of-factly of that problem. Suicide was no sort of answer to this. Even in death he'd fill the headlines, sadden Grandfather's quiet dusk, leave a stain of rumour on his own children.

"Let me see the children," he said.

They walked together down the road, turned up the lane, and came to the cottage. Rodney was playing on the floor. The boy recognized him and jumped up with a shout.

Peter kissed him once and then put him down, for fear. Elizabeth came out of the tiny kitchen and ran to her mother, eyeing him with distrust. Rodney wanted to know where he had been, and how many men he had killed. Elizabeth came to him slowly, of her own accord, and he held her at his knee for a time and then got up.

It was time to go. He said: "Have you got any men's clothes here that would fit me?"

"Yes," Emily said, "a suitcase of yours. I didn't mean to bring it. It came by mistake. What are you going to do?"

"It doesn't matter. Only, if anyone comes looking for me, don't tell them about the clothes. Where's the case?"

"Upstairs. I'll show you." He followed her to the narrow bedroom at the head of the stairs. He opened the

TROUBLE—3

The wise man thinks about his troubles only when there is some purpose in doing so.

Bertrand Russell

MY BROTHER TERRY

See page 37

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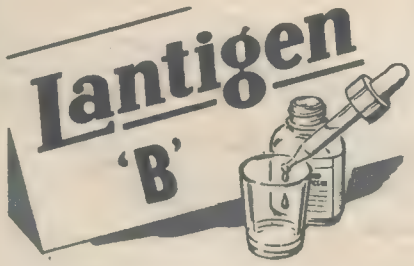

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case and found, among other things, an old tweed suit he had worn a lot in Zermatt in '09.

Emily went downstairs, and he changed quickly. He carried his uniform downstairs. She was sitting in an old kitchen chair by the fire. He began to throw the uniform on the fire, piece by piece. "Take the buttons and metal bits out and bury them tomorrow," he said.

This was the cruellest moment. He knew that he could keep her. He could take her round the waist, and his arms were strong. He could say: "It's all right. I love you. We'll start again."

But he was not David, but Cain. He stood away, when he had got control of himself, and said: "I won't tell you where I'm going. Goodbye, darling."

He swung quickly out of the door before the need to throw himself into her arms overcame him. He ran for a mile down the Llanbedr road and then settled down to a driving, punishing walking pace that would leave him thoroughly exhausted by the time he reached the village and the railway.

He knew what he was going to do. He was going to join the New Armies as a private soldier of infantry. It was as deep, as anonymous a place as he could think of, and no one would think to look for him there. There, in the universal slime of the trenches, he would be made to feel kinship and renounce leadership. There he would be helpless in the power of others, as so many had been helpless in his. He would learn what Emily and Gerry had learned, and suffer as they had suffered in learning it. Above all, he would never influence a soul again, for good or evil. . . .

It was dark, and they had eaten and were moving up in fours on the road. No one sang, because they were going into the Battle of the Somme, and they knew what they were going towards.

For eight months now, Peter had been Private William Smith.

"It'll all be the same in a 'undred years," the platoon funny man muttered.

"I wish it was a hundred years now, then," someone else answered.

"Quiet there," the officer whispered.

They fell into the communication trench and shuffled on in single file. The sky was lazy with the curve of star shells; the artillery grumbled around them. They reached the front line at last, and the Lancashires stood back.

"'Ere y'are, choom, there's your 'ole. You'll find it a little wet in t' rain, but us can't hov fairy queens for fourpence, can us?" Then the man was gone, and Private Freeth was muttering: "All very well for him to be hearty, he's going—back."

"Smith, Freeth, sentry till eleven. Here's the chart. . . ."

Peter leaned against the front wall, looking at the night. Boots and arms stuck out of the earth beside him. The whole trench was dug out of bodies, and riveted with bodies.

"This ain't war," Freeth muttered. "This is—madness. It's not right."

The night passed. The day began, silent, with summer rain slanting down on the trenches and occasionally gleaming on a German helmet as a man moved along the trench opposite, on the other side of the tangled thickets of wire. The attack was postponed twenty-four hours.

Peter slept fitfully, thinking of Emily and of Gerry, until they awakened him and gave him hot cocoa and a double tot of rum. . . .

Second Lieutenant Hardcastle's face was anxious. He was sharp-nosed and eager, a good young man. The whistle was in his mouth; the voice of the guns became a shriek as they propped the ladders in place and climbed up and over.

Instantly, though nothing was silent, only the machine-guns had a voice for Peter. A fury of shells burst above the front line and among them, but in his ears only the enemy spoke, and the enemy was the machine-guns. He forced through the wire, moved five paces to his left, and began to advance slowly, his rifle held across his body and the bayonet fixed. Hardcastle was dead already. He walked slowly on.

The sergeant beyond him was shouting, but no one could hear. The sergeant fell flat on his belly. Dead, too? No, he'd found that the German wire was uncut. The Germans were twenty yards away, helmets and faces peering over the wire. Peter fumbled for grenades and began to throw carefully while the sergeant tried to cut the wire. The Germans shot him, and the long wire-cutters fell from his hand.

Peter found the wire-cutters, ran back, and jumped into a shell hole. There were twelve men in the shell hole already, besides the uncountable dead. The attack had died away, and no one was moving.

The shelling increased, and every now and then a shell or a mortar bomb dropped into the crater, usually killing or wounding someone among them. As though to replenish the stock, half a dozen more men fell in on them from the second wave of the assault. It was about six o'clock in the morning.

Periodically during the following hours Peter crawled up the side of the crater and peered over the top. The German wire was about thirty yards away, lying in mountainous coils, so that it was impossible to tell where there was a gap.

Yet every time he looked, he thought there might be a place, directly in front, where a man could get through. He'd wait. If they were to advance again in the night, that was the place to head for.

Night dropped slowly on them, and with it the light grew stronger, for now more flashes prickled along the low horizons and the guns on both sides were firing star shell. Suddenly a wall of men loomed up from the British trenches. The German machine-guns opened up all along the line.

Three men dropped into the crater. "Get moving," one shouted. "Get on, we're attacking."

"Again?" the sergeant yelled. "We've been here all day without food or water."

More men were jumping into the crater as the new attack died away. Peter couldn't tell how many there were—ten, fifteen, perhaps, with rifles and bombs and bayonets ready.

"Come on!" Peter yelled, and started up the side of the crater, knowing that they'd follow. They were only stunned and frightened, needing a leader. Peter threw himself down, the wire-cutters in his hand. Men were beside and behind him.

He shouted: "Keep their heads down with grenades. Shoot at anything that moves. I don't need more than a minute."

They began firing and throwing, while in Peter's hands the wire-cutters snipped and the wire sprang back, and he crawled towards the enemy. The last strands of the wire parted and he jumped to his feet, shouting: "Follow me, lads." The bayonet ran like an oriflamme in front of him, and his lungs were full of shrieking power. He came to the parapet of the enemy's trench and went eight feet straight down, bayoneting the first German as he jumped.

The eyes of a half-dozen men in field grey were hypnotized on to him. He stared at them while he lifted the corpse on his bayonet and with a short jerk threw it off at their feet. They raised their hands slowly, never taking their eyes off him.

A rifle cracked in his ear, and one of the surrendered Germans fell, shrieking, his hands to his stomach. Peter wheeled round and slammed the butt of his rifle into Freeth's jaw. "Do you want them to fight for their lives?" he screamed. "Get round the corner."

Freeth scrambled to his feet, mouthing: "Yes, sir," and spitting teeth into the mud. Peter didn't know where he'd come from.

More British soldiers tumbled into the trench. Peter sent the men running out from him to left and right. The gap widened. He found a communication trench leading to the rear and led a charge to clear it.

They were going strong now, with pressure behind. It was safer in the maze of trenches than on the swept battlefield where the shells still thundered without cease. A maelstrom of men was pouring into the German trenches, fanning out both ways, down the communication trench, right and left along the support trench.

There were a dozen men round Peter, and in the light of a star shell he saw a sergeant's stripes. "Six Platoon, Forty-third Kents, sir," the sergeant shouted.

Peter told him to push on, not more than two hundred yards, keep the enemy busy, and prevent reinforcements from coming forward. More men appeared. He saw a single cloth star and a young, eager face.

"Second Lieutenant Gale," the man said. "F.O.O. with the Kents, sir. I've lost them. I'd better stick with you." The young man was peering at Peter's shoulders, puzzled at finding no rank badges, because Peter was obviously in command here.

F.O.O. That meant forward observation officer. These were the young men who had wires to the guns. Yes, there was a signaller beside him, and the wire trailing back along the trench. "Did you hear what I told that sergeant to do?" Peter said.

"Yes, sir."

"Be ready to support him on front and flanks."

"Yes, sir."

Freeth was there, a sly grin on his twisted face. "We're all here, Major Smith, sir," he said. "I handed over that front trench to some fellows in the Kents. . . ."

Eleven o'clock, twelve o'clock, one o'clock, two. . . . Peter was wounded, but he had led half a dozen attacks, pushed back half a dozen German counter-attacks. In the captured trenches there were the beginnings of order and shape. Men stumbled up and down, trying to find their units. God knows how many men were in the captured lines—perhaps a hundred and fifty, and Peter had several sergeants and at least three infantry officers among them, and Freeth calling him Major.

An hour before first light a lieutenant-colonel and a captain appeared, looking fairly fresh, followed by soldiers loaded down with bright new grenades and full ammunition pouches.

"I'm Jennings, commanding the Fusiliers," the colonel said. "And this is the battery commander supporting me. I have orders to take over this sector and consolidate. You're in command here, aren't you, er——?"

"Smith, sir," Peter said. He leaned back against the wall of the trench and fumbled for his waterbottle. All the fatigue he hadn't felt during the night now reached him.

"Yes, sir," the young artillery

STRANGE TALES OF THE SEA • 12

by Commander Douglas Duff

A mysterious tremor—and a ship died

The chief officer of the British steamer Shahzada relieved the second officer as officer of the watch at eight bells — four o'clock — on the morning of July 14, 1927, just as he did every day they were at sea. The sea was calm, with no wind, and visibility was perfect.

Though they had left Calcutta less than twenty-four hours before, he took a stellar observation to check the ship's position. Everything was well, the ship was making a steady eleven knots, and the sea was empty of other vessels. He went into the chartroom to work out his star-sight.

Five minutes later he was surprised to see that his captain had come on to the bridge, still wearing his pyjamas. He hurried out, wondering what had brought the Old Man on deck so early.

At that moment, the Shahzada, still thrusting ahead, suddenly heeled right over, listing more steeply with every second. Within half a minute the inclinometer was showing a list of fifteen degrees, and this was increasing rapidly.

The chief officer sprang down the ladder at the captain's order to rouse the chief engineer, but found him already making for the engine room.

They went as far as the top of the ladders together, and caught a terrifying glimpse of sea water already above the dynamo bed-plates and filling the starboard bilges. The chief officer ran for the bridge to report, and the engineer hurried to start the main pumps.

As the chief officer reached the bridge ladder, however, the Shahzada rolled right on to her side, with half her upper deck submerged and her keel just awash. He was thrown down the steep slope and fell into the sea. Several others dived after him as the ship continued her roll until her keel rose from the water.

There was no time to warn any of the men who were sleeping below and no time to launch boats or rafts.

Four minutes later, the Shahzada dived to the floor of the Indian Ocean, carrying twenty-one of her men with her. A passing ship, bound for Calcutta, fortunately picked up the remaining fifty.

The court of inquiry into her loss could find no cause for the appalling suddenness and completeness of the disaster. There was nothing to show how, or why, the water had rushed in so devastatingly suddenly, as the Shahzada had only two days previously passed the stringent tests of Lloyds' agents in Calcutta.

The captain said he thought that he had felt a slight tremor throughout her hull which roused him, but no one else had done so, not even two firemen, the only survivors from those below in the stokehold.

The loss of the Shahzada still ranks as one of the sea's greatest unsolved mysteries. Whatever it was that destroyed her could perhaps account for many similar cases in which modern, well-found ships have vanished without a trace, before they have even had time to broadcast a distress signal.

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officer said: "Major Smith is in command here."

The Fusilier colonel said: "No one seems to know what's been happening up here. Your fellows seem to have put up a good show." He peered at Peter, worried, like young Gale, because he couldn't see any rank badges.

"Thanks," Peter said. "Freeth, tell everyone to get back to our front line, quick. It'll be dawn in less than an hour, and then——"

Freeth said, "Yessir," saluted smartly, and ran off along the trench.

"You're dead beat, sir," the young gunner said, catching Peter's arm. Peter found he was swaying, and had to let the young man help him. He'd lost a lot of blood.

They stumbled back along the trenches. The young man pushed and heaved him up what had been the front wall of the German front-line trench, and they were in No Man's Land. They slid down into their old trench, and on towards the rear.

THE young officer said: "I'm going to make a report, of course, sir, and I daresay it's none of my business, but —I've been out for seven months now, and I've never seen anything like the way you got that mess organized. Or anyone so—well—brave, sir." He said the word awkwardly, as though mentioning something indecent.

"Thank you," Peter said.

"Jolly good idea not even to wear cloth badges," the young man said. "The snipers have been learning to pick them up."

"I am a private."

The young man chuckled appreciatively, but he was tired, and he said: "Major Smith, Coventry Regiment, isn't it, sir? I have to know for my report—and if I and your Private Freeth have anything to do with it, sir, you'll get a V.C."

"Anything you like," Peter said. "Call me Wilcot, South Wiltshire Yeomanry—or Walsh, Rifle Brigade. It doesn't matter." His head was spinning.

The young man stopped anxiously. "Are you sure you're all right, sir?" He looked up and down the road, but there was no one near them just then.

"Quite all right," Peter said.

"I've got to go," the young man said. "My battery's behind the wood. Can't I get someone to look after you till you reach hospital, sir?"

"No," Peter said. He grabbed the boy's hand, said: "I'm sorry," and walked on. He had done it again, and even in his extreme exhaustion he could feel a thin tightening of hatred and fear of himself.

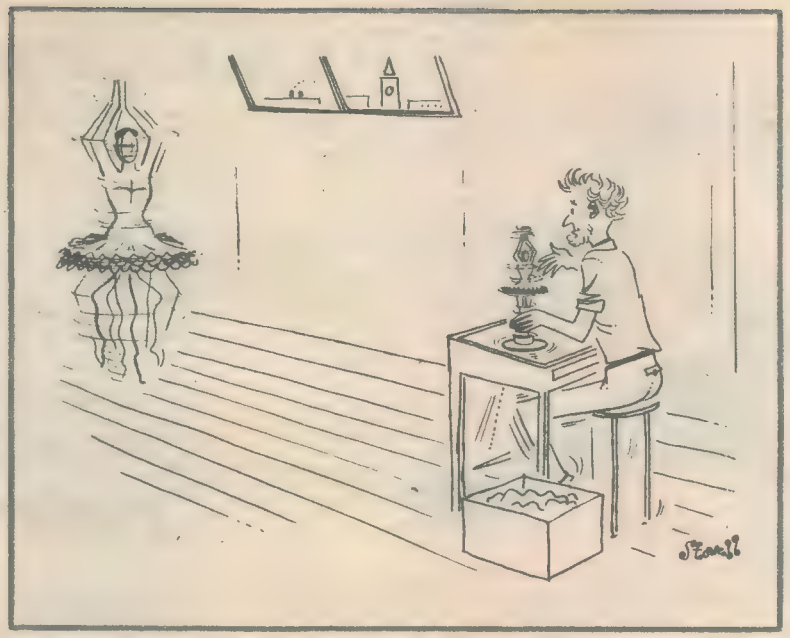
If he had not led through the gap in the wire, they would all have stayed in the crater. The attack would have wholly failed, as it was destined to do. He had torn a gap in the German wire and tonight the Germans would mount a full-scale counter-attack. Since they could fire into the gap from three sides, they would succeed, and more men would die, and afterwards all would be as it had been before.

There was a sign at the edge of a little farm—COVENTRIES and a couple of soldiers. But that wasn't his place any more, with so many men lying dead in the German trenches because of him, and the rest agog with the heroism of Private Smith. He couldn't face them, because he knew what they'd have waiting for him—a good big medal, the V.C. or the D.C.M., and a commission. All their faces would be proud, as Gerry's used to be, as Emily's used to be, because the elemental shape of power had come among them and taken them to places where they would be glad, tomorrow, not to have been.

He threw his rifle into the ditch and walked on. His pack was heavy, and he slipped it off on to the road behind him, and his steel helmet was heavy, and he let it fall. His haversack hurt his thigh; his bayonet flapped against his leg; his waterbottle was empty—all he let go.

"Halt," a voice said.

He halted. They meant him. They must, because there was no one else in sight except the two military policemen with red caps and pistols standing



beside a barn at the edge of the road.

They came forward to him. "Where are you going, chum?" one of them asked. . . .

Emily heard the distant clang of the front doorbell, and, a time later, Alice's tapping steps along the stone floor of the hall. Her father awoke with a start and sat up, his knuckles tight on the arms of his big chair.

"That was the front door. It will be a telegram—from Charlie Moss. His son had been out eighteen months. Or Peggy. Harry's been out since before Neuve Chappelle."

Alice came in, holding out the envelope with gloomy relish. "A telegraph letter, for you."

Emily opened it, and it was from Peggy: ARRIVING ON SEVEN-FORTY TRAIN AND ON IN STATION TRAP HOPE I CAN STAY THE NIGHT PEGGY.

She gave it to her father. He read it, and then again, as though he disbelieved it. "No one killed," he said. "It's strange." He handed it back.

Emily went out thoughtfully to speak to Alice and Bertha. The bed in the Sea Room would have to be made. Even if the train was on time, Peggy couldn't be here before nine.

It was six o'clock now. Peggy had sent the telegram from Birmingham. Strange. Stranger that she was coming at all. Strangest to be walking alone in this great house, with all the voices stilled or gone—Gerry dead at the foot of an Italian mountain; Mally dead, lying in the churchyard in the valley; Daddy, here but gone; Peter, gone; only the children made loud sounds here now.

She wondered if Peggy was coming with news of Peter. There had never been any news at all. The police came once to the cottage and went away. Peter had not written, and she had not expected him to. She had sent Peter away because he was a murderer. But life without him was a slow death of her own spirit, because somehow the rope had formed a permanent union and she, at least, could not survive alone. Could he? Peggy would tell her, tonight.

At nine she heard wheels crunching on the gravel and went to the front door. Alice had just opened it, and the lamp in the porte-cochère shone on the smoothed, round beauty of Lady Margaret Walsh.

Peggy came forward quickly to embrace her. "Emily! You look well. . . . It's lovely to be back at Llyn Gared. How are you, Alice?"

Alice had laid their supper at a table in the big drawing-room. "How nice!" Peggy said. "Cold mutton. Where do you get it from, dear? Of course, there are plenty of sheep on the hills still, aren't there? Do you think I could have a little wine?"

"I'll get it," Emily said, and went out.

So Peggy would play a game with her, waiting, glowing with the news she carried. She stopped suddenly, halfway up the cellar stairs, the dusty bottle of burgundy cold against her chest. *Peter had been killed.* No, it would not be that; that would be too simple, too final an end to bring Peggy here to watch it.

As she re-entered the drawing-room she found herself smiling. For a few minutes they ate and talked lightly. Then, the food only half finished on her plate, the glass empty at her right hand, Peggy wiped her lips delicately on the napkin and said: "You must be wondering why I came down, Emily."

"Not at all," Emily said. "Have some more wine," She refilled the glass. "You're always welcome here."

Peggy's eyes flashed momentarily; then she said: "There is a special reason, as a matter of fact. I've heard something. It may be just a rumour."

Her voice became a little sharper. "I've heard something about Peter. It's incredible, I can't *believe* it, but I thought how awful it would be if you heard it from someone else, so I thought I'd come down."

"He's not killed?" she asked steadily, looking straight at Peggy.

Peggy said: "It's rather worse than

TROUBLE—4

If pleasures are greatest in anticipation, just remember that this is also true of trouble.

Elbert Hubbard

being killed, in a way." She drank again, making the movements last a long time, and again wiping her lips carefully, and delicately laying down the napkin. "He's supposed to have been arrested as a deserter."

Emily kept her head up. This was really ludicrous. Peter? Deserting?

"In action?" she asked.

"That's what they are saying."

Emily nodded slowly. It could not be true. But it *was* true; whatever evil rumours Peggy brought her would be true.

Peggy was speaking. "You know, dear, it was I who told Peter where you were hiding when he came back from the Italian front."

"I know," Emily said.

Peggy said: "I knew you'd be angry with me—perhaps you still are—but I couldn't bear to think of you and Peter separating because of some misunderstanding when perhaps getting together again might have put everything right."

Emily glanced up and saw that her torturer's eyes were bright and large, and her hands flat on the table.

Peggy continued: "When Peter left you, he must have gone straight to join up in the infantry. As a private soldier, my dear, and under an assumed name—Smith, I heard. They sent him out to France, and then in the big battles in the late summer Peter ran away. Just threw down his rifle and ran away."

Emily held her head up. Was it really so bad that Peter should have run away from a fight? Such a thing could happen only if his whole outlook on life had changed. That might not be bad at all.

Peggy said: "Harry is going to get a D.S.O. . . . The military police caught Peter, of course, before he'd got very far. It's taken a long time to come out, because apparently they spent weeks trying to find out who he really was and it was all so complicated, because he'd deserted from the Gurkhas in a way."

"Where is he?" Emily interrupted.

"He's supposed to be in London," Peggy said, her confident expression of sympathy deepening.

Emily said: "You *know* he's in London, don't you, Peggy? You've seen him, haven't you?"

"Yes, I've seen him," Peggy said. "I came down, really, to tell you that you ought to think of taking the children out of the country—for a time, at any rate. Peter's changed out of all recognition. I don't think he's quite sane. But sooner or later he'll remember that you are rich—well, not so rich now, I suppose, like the rest of us—and then he'll come to you and you'll be left with him, and all the talk, for the rest of your life. Think of the children. Honestly, Emily, you ought to go *now*."

Emily said: "Don't be silly. I must go and see him."

Peggy sat back slowly, and now the look of triumph was unmistakable. She had succeeded. Now the vision was coming true in front of her eyes, of Emily tied for the rest of her life to a trembling piece of flotsam—Emily, who had married him for his power, his vivid awareness of living.

Emily could not keep her head up any longer, and it bowed under the weight of Peggy's implacable joy. She asked: "You have seem him—often?"

Peggy nodded, and looked away. After a moment she refilled her glass. "As a matter of fact, yes. He's living with his grandfather. No one seemed to want to go and see him, now that Gerry's dead, so I went. I got him to take me out two or three times, trying to cheer him up, you know—but it was no good."

Emily sat up quietly. She was so full of pride and anger and her love for Peter that when she spoke her voice was thick and deep. She said: "You know I will go to him, and you know why. Because I love him. Because he's my husband, Peggy. It's no pain, no dreadful thing that I'm going to face when I see him, only my husband, and my marriage."

Peggy was sitting back, her face dull red and her lips clenched between her teeth and the napkin crushed between her fingers.

Emily pushed back her chair. "You hate me, don't you?" she said.

"Yes. Yes," Peggy said suddenly. "I hate you."

"Because Peter married me instead of you?"

"Because you made love to him to get him. Oh, don't think it wasn't obvious in your eyes when you got down the Matterhorn that day—and you pretending to be my best friend."

Emily said: "I was your best friend, and I tried to be for years. You'd better go to your room. Thank you for coming down to tell me."

The triumph dimmed and went out. Peggy's face set to stone, and without a word she got up and ran out.

Emily sat down in front of the dying fire. The important thing, she thought, was to go to Peter and start rebuilding. She would have to find out what had happened in France—not as others saw it, but as Peter saw it. It might have been not so much a separate incident as the culmination of his whole life to that point. It might have been the end of something that began with Gerry's death, or with her own rejection of him.

At any rate, he was in London, and he needed her. She would make no more plans now, beyond going to her husband.

To be continued next week

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Land of singing death

Continued from page 11

the billabong. They were the most self-confident crocodiles I have ever seen.

By the evening my big toe had become poisoned. I had taken off my boot and felt sure that I would never be able to get it on again. Also, my lip was still extremely painful; and generally I was not up to much.

But despite all the pain and inconvenience, I felt pleased with the patrol so far. Others seemed to have entered Arnhem Land with fear in their hearts. I had no such fear. I wondered about the warnings of cannibalism. I discovered later that this was only partly true. The Liverpool River natives did not kill men for food. They ate human flesh largely from superstitious beliefs.

If they killed a worthy man in battle, they ate his heart, believing that they would inherit his valour and power. They ate his brain because they knew it represented the seat of a man's knowledge. If they killed a fast runner, they ate part of his legs, hoping thereby to acquire his speed. But these things I did not know that night as I lay under the net by the billabong. I could only hope for the best.

When I awoke the following morning, I could no longer walk. My throbbing foot had swollen badly and the poison was beginning to move up my leg.

My efforts to clean the wound were not conspicuously successful, and Oondabund, who had been watching carefully, had his own medical suggestions to offer.

"Toe belonga you quick feller clean," he said. "More better you lettim *gwuir* (fish) clean im."

He told me that the tiny, inch-long fish swarming around the banks of the billabong would do a better job than I, and, after much hesitation and frustration over my own efforts, I decided to give his suggestion a trial.

His method, however primitive, was remarkably efficacious and, though the fry hurt furiously, in a few minutes the toe was quite clean. I could now see a huge splinter embedded in it. I clamped a pair of artery forceps to the end and lay back on my swag while Oondabund pulled out the splinter, which was all of an inch and a half long, and left a gaping hole. I dressed the wound, and for the rest of the day I lay on my swag.

OONDABUND and Narlebar ate with me—as they always did. We shared the cooking; they were the tutors and I the pupil.

By the time I left the Territory I could cook with the best Arnhem Land aborigine. I cooked and ate snake and iguana and crocodile. Field mice, flying foxes, squirrels, oppossums and birds of nearly all types made good food. I ate mice only in emergency, but, baked in leaves or stewed in my treacle tin, they turned out well.

Crocodile, on the other hand, is poor food. The flesh is white, oily and tasteless. The top of the tail is the only edible part. . . .

I decided to spend a second day resting. My toe was better but painful, and I was reluctant to leave this delightful spot until I was well enough to travel without inconvenience.

In the evening, Oondabund told me that not very far from where we were camped he had cut the tracks of a large party of natives moving from the direction of the Blyth River towards the Liverpool. My foot would have benefited from another day's rest, but I thought it better to meet these natives as soon as possible, and we set off the next morning.

At six o'clock that evening we saw the natives, and one of the first persons I met was Jiminmulla, the brother of the murdered man.

He was a magnificent man. Unusually tall for an aborigine—he must have been every bit of six feet two—he had the strong torso and fine legs of an athlete.

He was looking for a chance to catch up with Nundul and Narminnierobu, the chief murderers. He believed that they were at Mahrdei's camp, only a day's march to the south, where a great crocodile corroboree was due to take place.

What Jiminmulla described as a "big feller mob" of natives had assembled for the corroboree. Jiminmulla, who had perhaps twenty men in his party, did not dare to go too near. He intended to hang about in the area, hoping that either or both of the murderers would one day cross his path.

I told him that I planned to go ahead and that we would descend on Mahrdei's camp the following day.

Jiminmulla, impressed by my rifle and shotgun, welcomed this chance to catch up with his enemies and immediately volunteered to accompany us.

We were off before dawn, travelling along one of the dry beds of the Liverpool. Jiminmulla had a lead of ten or fifteen yards when he turned a corner in the river bed.

His abrupt halt brought us all to a stop. We walked forward close to where he was standing, and there, ahead of us in the river bed, and extending beyond the banks, was a considerable native encampment. There were no young men in the camp, but perhaps fifty old men, *lubras* and piccaninnies. An old *lubra*, cooking over a fire, was the first to see us. Her long "*yackai,*" shrilled in fear, served as the alarm, and in an instant everyone was going helter-skelter for the bush beyond the banks. We must have seemed a fairly formidable little force.

Mothers grabbed children and ran with them wailing under their arms. Old men hobbled and ran, while the dogs kept up an incessant din. Within a minute the camp was deserted.

We walked in file into the centre of the camp and sat down. Oondabund, with two or three men, climbed the bank and called out to the women that they had nothing to fear from us. By ones and twos they began to come back, warily.

All the young men, it transpired, were away. Most of them had gone off early in the morning with Mahrdei on men's corroboree business. The rest, including Nundul and Narminnierobu, were out hunting.

Taking a dozen boys, including Jiminmulla, and the shotgun with him, Oondabund went looking for the hunting party. I sat down with Narlebar in the shade of a big banyan tree. Swarms of piccaninnies had come from all parts of the camp to inspect us, and Narlebar was chattering away with them.

My toe had been troubling me during the morning and to ease it I had removed my boot and was sitting with the injured foot resting on a log, and with my rifle leaning against the butt of the tree, eight or nine feet away.

I was half snoozing when I heard the children run off and Narlebar hiss: "Boss!"

I looked up and there, thirty paces in front of me, was a group of nine natives, all with woomeras and shovel-nosed spears. I stood up and, turning to Narlebar, asked what they wanted.

Two natives stood in front of the rest, one a squat, thick-set man, the other small and weedy, with sharp, rodent-like features.

The squat man answered for Narlebar.

"Nundul," he said.

"Be careful, Boss," whispered Narlebar. "This man bin cranky longa head."

Speaking in Gunwinggu language, a little of which I understood—and what I didn't, Narlebar translated into pidgin English—Nundul said that I had been looking for him and, instead, he had found me.

I told Nundul he had murdered a man and that it was my job to see that there was no more murder. If Jiminmulla caught him he would kill him. Jiminmulla had come with me, and while I was here there would be no killing. Nundul answered that he had no fear of Jiminmulla or his friends. It was bad luck he hadn't killed Jiminmulla before.

HE said he had spoken to Mahrdei who said that this was the black man's country and that I had no right to be there. I answered that I had been sent to take him and Narminnierobu with me to Darwin for an investigation.

"I'll take you whether you like it or not," I said.

I watched Nundul rock back on his heels, and I think he said something about "*balander* (white man) talk big."

As he spoke, he fitted a spear into his woomera and flung it with elastic ease and power. I realized rather than saw what was happening, and I was on my way to the ground before the spear was more than a length from his hand. I knew later that he had thrown to miss and that the spear struck quivering in the tree a good seven feet from the ground. Nundul and his friends leaped and danced with delight. Even the rat-like Narminnierobu joined in the jeers and catcalls.

I knew that I would never live to reach the rifle if I jumped for it. I knew that I shouldn't stay grovelling on the ground like this. But my brain was in no shape to command my legs.

Narlebar caused me to get to my feet. He had sprung towards me, and I couldn't lie there while he stood.

"You're a brave man," I said in English, and Narlebar translated the gist of what I had to say, "when you have a handful of spears and I have nothing. If you want to fight, drop those spears and I'll give you a fight. I'm not afraid."

Nundul shouted with rage, and saliva trickled down his chin.

"Him properly mad," Narlebar whispered. I had erred again. It was touch and go now.

In the middle of Nundul's violent outburst another voice broke in. "Nundul!"

We all turned, and there was my magnificent Oondabund with the shotgun aimed fairly at Nundul. With him, spread out in a semi-circle to cover Nundul's group, were Jiminmulla and eight men.

I made a flying leap for my rifle.

Oondabund, furious at the sight of the spear sticking out of the tree above my head, immediately challenged Nundul to fight with spears.

When Nundul agreed, the situation showed every prospect of getting out of hand once again. I shouted at Oondabund to stay where he was and, handing my rifle to Narlebar, walked up to Nundul.

"You're a brave man when you have a spear," I said. "Let's see how brave you are without a spear. You savvy to fight with that?" And I held up my fists. Nundul made no reply but leaped at me like a kangaroo, a great, flying jump that took me by surprise. We both crashed to the ground.

NUNDUL was on top, and he got me in the belly with his knee and I felt my wind go. I broke loose from a sort of half headlock and got to my feet again. Already I was bleeding. My shirt was out and, of course, I still had one boot on and one off.

Nundul came for me again with another wild leap. I hit him as he came, a powerful wallop that got him in the chest and threw him back to the ground. I went for him there. I was on top this time and I got him across the face before he broke loose. He hit me with the elbow just above the eyes, a stunning blow, and then cracked me on the mouth.

I pulled away from him and he came at me again. This time I hit him on the heart. He went half over, doubling up, and I hit him with everything I knew. He jumped, clawing for my face with his hands, and I hit him on the nose and felt it break under the force of my fist. He reeled away with tears streaming down his face, and I finished him.

He went down in the dust and lay there. The mob was not friendly, but all my own boys were loyal.

I was conscious that the crowd had grown considerably.

Pushing his way through the crowd came Mahrdei the witchdoctor. He had come back from his secret corroboree and now, with three spears in his right hand, and without even the vestige of clothing or ceremonial adornment, he confronted me. He looked at me without speaking for a full minute and then, angrily and sarcastically, spoke in a dialect I didn't understand.

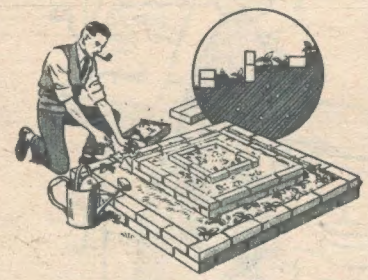
Oondabund translated: "Him bin say, 'So great *balander* has returned,'" giving me as much of Mahrdei's obviously sarcastic greeting as he felt was good for me.

Mahrdei walked into the shade of the banyan tree and squatted down, indicating that I should join him there, and we talked through Oondabund for the best part of three hours.

Mahrdei had no time for Nundul and

Your Garden and Mine

by PERCY THROWER



As my garden is such a small one, I built a pyramid plant bed. I first made a border of bricks four feet by four feet and filled it in with soil. Next I made another border on top, shortening each side by one foot, and filled that with soil. Then I repeated the process, with an even smaller border, to make the top layer.

Small plants can be easily grown and tended in such a bed.—F. W. HOMER, Birmingham, 8.

For some years my Cox's Orange Pippin flowered very well but bore few apples. Two years ago I made a slanting cut into one of its branches, pulled the branch down a little to open the cut, and inserted an eight-inch twig from a Worcester Pearmain. Then I bound the grafting with wet clay. Last year I had a bumper crop.—M. G., Thames Ditton, Surrey.

PERCY THROWER says: A pyramid garden can be quite attractive, but it will dry quickly unless plenty of peat is mixed with the soil to retain the moisture. It will also require frequent watering in dry weather.

Some fruits will not set when pollinated from their own flowers. If a pollinating variety is not growing nearby, grafting in April is the only way to get a reasonable crop. The Doyenné du Comice pear, for instance, needs a variety such as Laxton's Superb for pollination.

JOHN BULL pays five guineas each for the best original, topical gardening hints sent to Percy Thrower, JOHN BULL, 189 High Holborn, London, W.C.1. No entry can be returned unless a stamped addressed envelope is enclosed.

Narminnierobu. But it was none of my business to chase them. That was the business of Jiminmulla.

I asked him about the girl who had been "sung" to death on the coast. There, I told him, they said that Mahrdei had "sung" the girl.

He nodded solemnly and said the girl had committed adultery and deserved to die. He had merely spoken to the spirits and what the spirits decided was none of his concern.

I jeered at him. "You talk of powers, you and your bag of bones and your spirits. Don't talk. Show me something, you old fraud."

Oondabund got to his feet and took me by the arm. "Boss," he pleaded, "Mahrdei, him properly Number One medicine man."

Our talk ended on a distinctly unfriendly note, and, with Oondabund, Jiminmulla and the rest of my boys, I selected a camp site about four hundred yards away from the main camp.

Nundul and Narminnierobu were a major problem. There didn't seem to be any way I could hold them. And, much as I was attracted by Jiminmulla, I couldn't be sure so long as he remained with me—and he showed no signs of leaving—that he wouldn't take justice into his own hands and administer it with one of his shovel-nosed spears.

On Oondabund's advice, I made no attempt to seize Nundul and Narminnierobu. Instead, as soon as my own camp was ready, I got out my medical kit and examined the children. Later I shot enough duck and wallaby to make a substantial contribution to the tribal larder. The gift was well received. The early hostility was no longer so pronounced, and many of the natives were even quite friendly.

THE whole series of camps, which stretched for nearly a mile towards one of the larger billabongs forming the course of the Upper Liverpool, was now the scene of great activity. During the coming night and on the following day, I learned, the great crocodile corroboree was due to come to its conclusion.

To the south, close to the largest billabong, the *lubras* had cleared a circle about a hundred yards in diameter. At the billabong, members of a hunting party, like the keepers at a zoo, were dishing out wallabies and kangaroos to the crocodiles.

I counted more than thirty crocodiles in the billabong, the most villainous lot I had ever seen. The feeding had been going on for about a week.

When the hunting party had finished laying out the wallabies, three black crocodiles, all of them sixteen-footers, came out of the water, not twenty yards from where I was standing with Oondabund and Jiminmulla. One seized a wallaby and dragged it back into the water. The others nibbled for a time, but not with any marked enthusiasm or interest.

Before dark the *lubras* lighted a ring of fires around the corroboree ground. This was their final contribution to the night's programme. Now the men took over. For hours many of them had been preparing, daubing their faces and bodies and arms with yellow, or blue, or red ochre, as serious as West End actors waiting backstage for the curtain to go up.

Every clan had its own didgeridoo, its own "song-man" and its own collection of men who beat time with sticks.

The corroboree began.

Fifty men, with their hands on their hips, weaved into the centre of the circle in a conga-like line. They were painted red, with white feathers on their arms to serve as scales. Small bushes on their ankles swished softly like the sound of a snake moving through long grass.

The dance, Oondabund said, was based on the belief that long before the black men came to Arnhem Land a big snake lived in a waterhole, and, when the occasion demanded, left the hole and went on a walkabout that covered the entire country.

There were corroborees of wars and past fights and the dust rose thickly

"And a bar of S-O-A-P"

into the air as warriors, ochred for battle, stamped round the circle, stalking legendary foes in legendary battles.

It was long after midnight before Mahrdei appeared. He came as a skeleton, naked except for the briefest of nargas, his pandanus dilly bag of magic and crocodile teeth around his neck, and other bracelets of crocodile teeth around his wrists and ankles.

His was more of an incantation than a dance. He stopped before each group, put his hand in the charm bag and sprinkled dust before them. He went round the circle, missing no single group. It must have taken him half an hour; and in all that time there was no sound other than his.

As he approached my own little group, Mahrdei paused and repeated his dance, a leap into the air, a turn here, a twist there and then with a flourish threw the dust from the dilly bag on the ground where we sat.

Our sleep that night was brief. I was lost in a terrifying nightmare land of snakes and crocodiles and medicine

TROUBLE—5

Worry is interest paid on trouble before it becomes due.

W. R. Inge

men when I awoke in a sweat of fear. Though piccaninny dawn was not yet showing, the main camp was not only all awake but indulging in the most blood-chilling of chants.

We wasted no time in moving back to the main camp. Towards the billabong and the corroboree ground newly banked fires threw a bright glow over the heads of the assembled natives.

We pushed our way through. And there, grasping a spear in one hand and his woomera in the other, stood Mahrdei. He had thrown off his narga and leaped and twirled before the crowd. In this light the ochre with which he had drawn the bones of his body seemed phosphorescent. He was a marionette of bones dancing on the end of a string.

And then, as his dance ended, the frenzy turned to stone and from his lips came his high, song-man chant, a hideous, intolerable lament, an appeal to all aboriginal spirits that had entered the bodies of crocodiles, to the men of the tribe who had died in battle and who now, in this first dark hour of coming dawn, lay on the banks of the billabong and tore at the carcasses of the rotting wallabies and kangaroos.

At dawn, Mahrdei broke through the line of men surrounding the corroboree ground in a series of leaps and bounds and song; he went down to the billabong, and all of us went after him. The hypnosis of the scene had me in its grip. As Mahrdei stopped, I stopped. As Mahrdei ran. I ran.

On the bank of the billabong were six crocodiles, long and black and fearful. Mahrdei stopped when he first saw them. He stopped and pointed his spear and again sang to the spirits of the men who had died and now lay on this putrid bank.

There had been no move as he sang, no move while he alone was the song-man, but when he soared into his dance the crocodiles turned and slid off the bank and out, with scarcely a ripple, into the waters of the billabong.

There were now more crocodiles than I had ever seen in one place; there were at least forty, pulling at the wallabies on the stakes in the water, lying motionless like logs, out on the banks at the far side of the billabong. Mahrdei knew them all. He pointed with his spear to one that had gone from the bank and now, as if summoned to listen, lay in the water in front of him. Mahrdei called him by name. He told him when he had died and how his spirit lived on, a great warrior and a great crocodile.

One by one, he turned to the brutes. They were all his men, his crocodiles.

The sun was struggling through the overcast when Mahrdei ceased his exhortations. His spear and his woomera fell to the mud. His arms hung limp, then taut, by his side. His eyes were opened but unseeing. His silence was the silence of all.

The quiet lasted for all of two minutes, and then, in a robot walk, a death march, step by step, slowly, slowly but never hesitating and all the time talking softly to his crocodiles, Mahrdei went to the water. No splash, no ripple; but suddenly he was off in a long, leisurely breast-stroke towards the centre of the billabong.

Ten yards, fifteen yards, twenty yards. Any of four crocodiles should have had him now. They were behind him, only feet away, with their great snouts in the water close to his back.

It was unbearable. I wanted to cry out; but I could not have spoken. I was afraid. I was entranced.

Mahrdei had gone about forty yards, his head and rhythmically moving shoulders going through the water. He was there. My eyes never left him. He was there, and then, as he had begun, without a sound, he was gone.

From the aborigines on the bank, there came a great cry, men, women and children together in a long and hideous lamentation. The blue and red parakeets swept excitedly out of the trees, and down the billabong the crocodiles that had lain so still now stirred in the water. All was noise and discord, the crying of children, the shrill jabbering of *lubras* and the shouting of men.

Instinctively, I joined the throng that pushed to the edge of the water.

At that moment a man standing by me shouted and pointed at our feet. For a second I could see nothing. Then the deep, brown waters parted and Mahrdei came from the water. He literally burst out. He gripped the bank and sprang forward and to his feet. Ochre streamed in white rivulets down his body. His eyes were yellow, and he gulped down the fresh air like a runner at the end of a mile race.

He filled his lungs and raised his arms in triumph. The tribesmen amplified his cry into a bellow of joy.

Mahrdei turned to me. He pointed to the water from which he had just come and spoke in his own language.

Before I could properly understand, Oondabund answered for me. "The *balander* (white man) does not swim with crocodiles."

Mahrdei threw back his head and laughed. He shouted his question and the answer to the tribesmen. "The *balander* does not swim with crocodiles."

They laughed. Piccaninnies rolled in the dirt and the *lubras* howled and the men along the banks and sitting in the forks of the trees rocked and roared at the greatest joke ever heard in the upper reaches of the Liverpool River.

It was good humour, not ill. Mahrdei had had his day, and I, the *balander*, would need to live a long time before I had mine.

I LEFT them to it and, with Oondabund and Jiminmulla and half a dozen other boys, walked quietly back to my camp.

I realized that I would have to face up to Mahrdei. It was probably some sort of reaction to the morning's humiliations that caused me to think of entering the "debil debil" stone country. I knew almost every native in the area was afraid of it. Perhaps, subconsciously, I wanted to prove to Mahrdei that I was every bit as strong a man as he. I was turning over the idea in my mind when Oondabund, who had been across to the main camp, returned with what was clearly some exciting news.

"Nundul and Narminnierobu bin gone walkabout," said Oondabund.

This was the final straw.

In the early afternoon Mahrdei confirmed that the two men had gone. He was full of good spirits and malice over his performance at the billabong in the morning.

I told him I was undecided whether to pursue the two men or to go south to the escarpment, which rose out of the plain about twenty-five miles away to a height of between six hundred and eight hundred feet.

Mahrdei said that the "stone country" was no place for anyone to go. He had been there; but others—certainly no *balander*—had his powers. He said he knew of a group of "stone people" who lived in the escarpment. They were very shy and timid and suspicious and had no contact with his tribe. He warned me that if I went there I would never come out alive.

At that moment I decided that Nundul and Narminnierobu could wait until I had seen Mahrdei's "stone country."

NEXT WEEK: I am lost in the "debil debil" land

"Diamond Fever," William Fleming's story of prospecting in British Guiana, which was serialized in JOHN BULL at the end of 1955, is published this week as a book. The story has been expanded by Wilfred Greatorex, and is published by Cassell at 18s.

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In The.....Area	A Proper .....
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EXAMPLE .....

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RULES 1. First Prize for best *Bullet* received. Others in order of merit; the test is of cleverness, aptness and originality.

2. Editor undertakes that all *Bullets* received shall be accorded careful consideration by competent adjudicators.

3. As entry-fee enclose P.O. at the rate of 6d. per *Bullet*. Fee submitted will be taken to cover *Bullets* in coupon order—any sent in excess will be disqualified. Plain-paper entries are allowed. Make P.O. payable to JOHN BULL, cross /& Co./, write name and address on back. Coupons must not be mutilated.

4. Entries accepted by post only and on condition that result of this Contest (in JOHN BULL dated May 18), also Editor's decision in any matter of dispute, are accepted as final and legally binding. Odhams' employees (and families) ineligible.

(See "Daily Herald" on Saturday, May 4, for early news of No. 2,086 result.)

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